KEY TEXTS

THOEMMES

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Classic Studies in the History of Ideas

SCHOPENHAUER

Patrick Gardiner

THOEMMES
PRESS

This edition published by Thoemmes Press, 1997

Thoemmes Press
11 Great George Street
Bristol BS1 5RR, England

US office: Distribution and Marketing
22883 Quicksilver Drive
Dulles, Virginia 20166, USA

ISBN 1 85506 525 8

This is a reprint of the 1963 edition

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Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original book may be apparent.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE TO THE REPRINT EDITION

My book on Schopenhauer originally appeared at a time when (as I remarked in the Preface) contemporary discussions of his philosophy and its significance were in short supply. Furthermore, over sixty years had elapsed since some of the English translations of his works had last been published, these not always being complete or indeed easy to come by. On both counts the situation today is very different.

There are the following new translations:
On the Basis of Morality, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Indianapolis, 1965).
On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, trans. E. F. J. Payne (La Salle, Illinois, 1974).
Parerga and Paralipomena, trans. E. F. J. Payne (2 vols., Oxford, 1974).
On the Will in Nature, trans. E. F. J. Payne, ed. D. E. Cartwright (New York and Oxford, 1992).
On Vision and Colours, trans. E. F. J. Payne, ed. D. E. Cartwright (Oxford, 1994).
The World as Will and Idea, trans. J. Berman, ed. D. Berman (abridged edition, London, 1995).

Recent commentaries and critical discussions include:
Michael Fox (ed.), *Schopenhauer: His Philosophical Achievement* (Brighton, 1980).

D. W. Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer* (London, 1980).
Bryan Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Oxford, 1983).
Julian Young, *Willing and Unwilling: A Study in the Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer* (Dordrecht, 1987).
Christopher Janaway, *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy* (Oxford, 1989).
F. C. White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (Leiden, 1992).
John E. Atwell, *Schopenhauer and the Character of the World: The Metaphysics of Will* (Berkeley and London, 1995).

There is also a recent biographical study:
Rüdiger Safranski, *Schopenhauer and the Wild Years of Philosophy*, trans. E. Osers (London, 1989).

This is the first full-length life to appear in English for many decades, superseding earlier accounts by W. Wallace and H. Zimmern. Although generally serving in their time as useful sources of information, neither of the latter books is comparable in range, detail or accuracy with the new biography and the extensive research on which it is based.

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Editorial Foreword

IN undertaking a critical study of the philosophy of Schopenhauer Mr Patrick Gardiner has rendered a notable service both to the general reader and to professional philosophers. For while there are a few philosophers whose name is more widely known than that of Schopenhauer, the study of his writings, at least in this country, has fallen largely into neglect. A not unfounded distrust of his metaphysics has led to the false assumption that there is nothing of philosophical importance to be learned from him. Mr Gardiner corrects this superficial impression by showing that even Schopenhauer's extravagances very often proceed from sharp philosophical insights. In particular, admirers of Wittgenstein may be surprised to discover the extent to which his thought was influenced by Schopenhauer's. It is to be hoped that Mr Gardiner's penetrating study will lead to a revival of interest in Schopenhauer's work.

A. J. AYER

Preface

THE first edition of Schopenhauer's collected works was produced by his literary executor, Julius Frauenstädt, in 1873. It was followed by the revised and amplified editions of E. Grisebach (Leipzig, 1891), Paul Deussen (Munich, 1911 ff.) and A. Hübscher (Wiesbaden, 1946–50), these incorporating further material which Schopenhauer had left in interleaved copies of his works and in manuscript-books.

Schopenhauer has been extensively translated. *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* has two English translations: *The World as Will and Idea*, by R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp (3 volumes, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1883), and *The World as Will and Representation*, by E. F. J. Payne (2 volumes, Falcon's Wing Press, Colorado, 1958). Of Schopenhauer's other books, *Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde* (*On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*) and *Über den Willen in der Natur* (*On the Will in Nature*) were translated and published in one volume by Mme K. Hillebrand in 1889; *Über die Grundlage der Moral* (*On the Foundation of Morality*) was translated by A. B. Bullock in 1903; and a translation of the companion essay, *Über die Freiheit des Willens* (*On the Freedom of the Will*) has now been produced by K. Kolenda (New York, 1960), together with a helpful introduction and bibliography. Translations of a number of the papers included in *Parerga und Paralipomena* are to be found in *Selected Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer*, by E. B. Bax (London, 1891), and in *Schopenhauer: Essays*, by T. Bailey Saunders (Allen & Unwin, London, 1951).

Apart from Father Copleston's sharply critical study, *Arthur Schopenhauer, Philosopher of Pessimism* (London, 1946), there is a dearth of useful modern commentaries on Schopenhauer in English, although interesting discussions of particular features of his ideas and influence have recently appeared in writings not directly concerned with him. Philip Rieff's *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* (London, 1959) and Erich Heller's *The Ironic German: A Study of Thomas Mann* (London, 1958) are cases in point; while aspects of Schopenhauer's connexion with Wittgenstein's philosophical development are considered by Erik Stenius in *Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (London, 1960) and by Miss G. E. M. Anscombe in *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (London, 1959). There are English biographies by William Wallace (London, 1890) and by Helen Zimmern (London, 1932), though for a fuller treatment the reader is referred to the biography in German by W. Schneider (Vienna, 1937). Thomas Mann's essay on Schopenhauer, the translation of which forms the Introduction to the volume

of selections in Cassell's *Living Thoughts Library* (1939), is also worth reading.

Although E. F. J. Payne's new translation of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* is excellent, in many ways representing an improvement upon its predecessor, the older Haldane and Kemp rendering is none the less respectable and remains more readily available to readers in this country. Accordingly, all my references which concern Schopenhauer's main work are to the latter translation, and are given simply by volume and page – e.g. 'II, p. 43'; I am greatly indebted to Messrs. Routledge and Kegan Paul for its use. I have not, however, in every case adopted the version provided by Haldane and Kemp, making changes or modifications where it seemed desirable. Regarding *Parerga und Paralipomena,* all references are to the German two-volume edition of this work by Frauenstädt (6th ed., 1888). In the case of Schopenhauer's other books I have cited sections or chapters (most of which are short) instead of giving page-references, the titles in question being abbreviated as follows:

On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason	*FR*
On the Will in Nature	*WN*
On the Foundation of Morality	*FM*
On the Freedom of the Will	*FW*

In quoting from these works I have used, but quite often deviated from, the existing translations.

Acknowledgements are due to Routledge and Kegan Paul for kindly granting permission to quote from *The World as Will and Idea* and from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*; and to Basil Blackwell for permission to quote from Wittgenstein's *Notebooks 1914–1916*.

In conclusion, I wish to thank Professor Stuart Hampshire for much helpful advice and criticism. I am also indebted to Mr David Pears and to the editor of the series, Professor Ayer, for a number of valuable suggestions.

P. L. G.

CHAPTER ONE

Life and Introduction

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER was born in Danzig on 22 February 1788. His father, Heinrich Floris Schopenhauer, whose ancestry was partially Dutch, was a successful merchant of wide cultural interests and enlightened views: an ardent opponent of all forms of despotic or absolutist government and an admirer of Voltaire, he was well read in both English and French literature and possessed an extreme fondness for travel. He married Johanna Henriette Trosiener, also of an influential Danzig family, who shared his cosmopolitan and literary tastes and subsequently wrote a number of novels. Despite their common interests, however, they do not appear to have been well suited in other ways; the husband was of a passionate and exacting temperament, increasing deafness making him more difficult as he grew older, and his wife's character seems to have been marked by a certain lightness and hardness, an inward complacency, which later led a member of her circle of acquaintances to describe her as being without heart or soul.

The first five years of Schopenhauer's life were spent in Danzig. In 1793, with the second partition of Poland and the Prussian annexation of Danzig, his father decided that to remain in the city under the new régime would be insupportable, and he accordingly transferred his family to Hamburg, where he carried on his business for the next twelve years. During this period Schopenhauer received an unconventional and somewhat sporadic education. His father was determined that he should follow him into commerce and that his training should be one which gave him some early experience of the world instead of restricting him to the artificial conditions imposed by ordinary schooling; at the age of nine therefore – a year after the birth of his only sister, Adele – he was put in the care of a business friend, a Monsieur Grégoire, in France,

where he spent two years and acquired a very thorough knowledge of the language. Again, in 1803, he was taken by his parents on a protracted tour abroad; this included a long stay in England, during which he was left to board for three months at a school in Wimbledon. The school, run by a clergyman, was managed on narrow and unimaginative lines, involving among other things attendance at exceedingly lengthy religious services, and the experience as a whole seems to have left a disagreeable and lasting mark on the boy's mind; while he was later to express great admiration for the achievements of individual English thinkers and writers, he also often referred with acid distaste to the stuffy atmosphere of cant and hypocritical religiosity that pervaded many areas of ordinary English social life.

By the age of sixteen Schopenhauer already showed signs of what his mother impatiently described as a morbid tendency to 'brood over the misery of things'. On the return journey from England through southern France and Austria, for example, he was forcibly struck by the squalid conditions in which the poorer classes of the population lived, and was particularly impressed by the sight of the galley-convicts at Toulon, doomed to a hopeless fate from which there could be no escape. The strain of melancholy in his nature, and his heightened sensitivity to the cruelties and horrors that plague human life, were strengthened by the sudden death in 1805 of Heinrich Schopenhauer. Although he disliked the choice of a career which the latter had marked out for him, Schopenhauer seems to have been genuinely attached to his father, and this event, coming in the midst of a disturbed adolescence, undoubtedly shocked and appalled him; nor can the circumstances in which it occurred – it seems almost certainly to have been a case of suicide – have failed to remind him of the previous history of mental unbalance and nervous disorder in his family.[1] Out of loyalty to a promise he had given, he continued to work for two more years in the mercantile office at

1. As some of his later writings show, the phenomena of insanity and psychological illness retained throughout his life an unmistakable fascination for him.

Hamburg which he had originally joined in compliance with his father's wishes, but, realizing the occupation to be in every way utterly uncongenial to him, he eventually resigned from the job in 1807 and decided to apply himself instead to the study of Greek and Latin.

Schopenhauer began his classical studies at a school in Gotha, but shortly afterwards had to leave as a result of antagonizing one of the masters. He transferred to Weimar, where his mother now lived and where she had formed a *salon*, surrounding herself with such celebrated literary figures as Goethe, Schlegel, and the brothers Grimm; his relations with his mother were such, however, that it was thought best that they should not live under the same roof. Instead Schopenhauer lodged with the classical philologist, Franz Passow, receiving tuition from him while at the same time visiting Johanna regularly during the week. His academic progress under Passow was rapid and impressive, but the bitter antipathy between him and his mother, which on Schopenhauer's side seems to have had some profound psychological origin in deprivation or fear, only grew more extreme, expressing itself in violent disagreements and quarrels. It was perhaps fortunate for both that in 1809 Schopenhauer, having arrived at the age of twenty-one, received his share of his father's inheritance, and became financially independent; his first step was to leave Weimar and enter the University of Göttingen, where he spent the next two years. He enrolled as a medical student, and in the course of his first terms mainly attended lectures on scientific subjects, particularly physics, chemistry, and physiology. Gradually, however, his attention turned increasingly towards philosophy, and in his second year, under the guidance of the professor at Göttingen, G. E. Schulze, he became deeply interested in the two thinkers who were to be most influential in the development of his own system, Plato and – above all – Immanuel Kant.

The philosopher with the highest reputation in Germany at this period was Kant's one-time follower, Fichte, and it was largely with a view to hearing him lecture that Schopenhauer moved to the University of Berlin in the autumn of 1811,

although here again he gave up a considerable part of his time to scientific study. Both Fichte and his colleague, Schleiermacher, were a very great disappointment to him, even if some of the former's ideas – especially concerning the nature of the will and the role it plays in knowledge – made a deeper impression upon his mind than he subsequently cared to admit. He took copious notes of the lectures they gave, but annotated them with uncomplimentary and sarcastic comments of his own: Fichte was described as pompous, obscurantist, long-winded, and he took violent exception to Schleiermacher's claim that philosophy should be founded upon religious faith, protesting that it was, on the contrary, of the essence of a truly philosophical attitude to wish to walk 'without leading-strings' and on a path 'dangerous but free'. Schopenhauer's contempt for university teachers of philosophy, which he vented in all his published works, in fact dated from the stage when he was still only a student – a point worth remembering by those who have seen in his later attacks upon the professional philosophers of his age no more than pique and resentment at the lack of recognition accorded to his own books. The truth was that by the time of his stay in Berlin, he had already made up his mind for himself on a number of questions relating to the proper scope and method of philosophy, and that this uncompromising independence of outlook, coupled with a considerable degree of intellectual self-assurance, made it impossible for him to approach his teachers in the spirit of respectful acquiescence shown by his fellow-students; in consequence he gained among them a reputation for being overbearing and arrogant. Certainly a portrait made of him at about this period suggests a formidable and intense personality, with finely-shaped eyes at once introspective and appraising, and an expressive rather sensual mouth.

Schopenhauer's university career came to an abrupt end in 1813 when, after Napoleon's defeat in Russia, Prussia rose against the French. The nationalistic fervour that swept the country left him unmoved. He had a rooted suspicion and dislike of militaristic sentiment in all its forms, and in any case held no very high opinion of German civilization as compared

with that of the French: why, too, should he feel loyalty to a nation which had deprived his native city of its independence, thereby necessitating the departure of his family from it? Instead of taking part in the struggle, he therefore retired to Rudolstadt, a small principality south of Weimar, where he worked from June onwards in an attempt to finish his doctoral thesis, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* – a book that showed clearly the impact of Kantian ideas upon his thinking. By the beginning of October he had submitted it, not – as he originally intended – at Berlin, but to the University of Jena, and had been granted his doctorate; before the end of the year it was printed at his own expense by the press at Rudolstadt, without however attracting much notice. After its completion Schopenhauer returned to his mother at Weimar, and here he at least had the satisfaction of being complimented by Goethe on what he had written: Goethe had read the book, and seems to have felt that there were connexions between some of Schopenhauer's ideas and certain theories of his own which he had propounded a few years previously in a treatise on colours (*Farbenlehre*). A number of meetings followed, during which Goethe's anti-Newtonian conception of the nature of colour was exhaustively discussed, and as a consequence of these conversations Schopenhauer himself produced a short book on the subject, *On Vision and Colours*, sending the manuscript to Goethe in the autumn of 1815. The essay in question, which was published in the following year and occupies only a peripheral place in the development of Schopenhauer's main philosophical position, was largely an attempt to show that our apprehension of colours is due to a qualitative and quantitative division in the activity of the retina when stimulated by light, this division corresponding to our perception of particular colours in complementary pairs of 'opposites' – e.g. red and green, orange and blue, yellow and violet – to which numerical ratios can be assigned. An exchange of letters resulted from Goethe's reception of Schopenhauer's rather curious excursion into the theory of vision, but in a fairly short time the divergence between their general outlooks became plain, and the correspondence petered out. 'We dealt

with many things in mutual agreement,' Goethe wrote later, 'but at last a certain division became inevitable, as when two friends who have hitherto gone together say good-bye – the one, however, wanting to go north, the other south, so that they very speedily lose sight of each other.'

In 1814 Schopenhauer went to live at Dresden, having parted company with his mother for good; and it was at Dresden, during the next four years, that he composed his chief philosophical work, *The World as Will and Idea.* The thought of writing such a book had taken possession of him while he was still at Berlin, where he had already begun to keep a preparatory notebook in which he entered his ideas as they occurred to him. 'Under my hands,' he wrote in 1813, 'and still more in my mind grows a work, a philosophy, which will be an ethics and a metaphysic in one – these having been hitherto separated as falsely as man has been divided into soul and body';[1] and he compared the development of his system to that of a child gradually growing in the womb of its mother, each new insight as it came to him ultimately springing from 'a single foundation', so that he need feel no anxiety lest his various ideas should not in the end be seen to fit together into a coherent whole. Quite apart from the light they throw upon his method of work and upon the extraordinary self-confidence, amounting almost to a sense of mission, with which he approached his task, the notebooks he filled both before and during the Dresden period are of interest from other points of view: they show how early the main outlines of his philosophy had taken shape in his mind, and also give abundant clues to the direction of his reading, which included Hobbes and the British empiricists, a quantity of eighteenth-century works on physiology and psychology (Helvétius and Cabanis were favourite authors), and translations of Indian mystical texts – in particular the Upanishads – to which he had been introduced by the Orientalist, F. Mayer, at the time of his final stay in Weimar. Schopenhauer's life in Dresden was nevertheless not exclusively occupied by the preparation of the book which

1. *Erstlingsmanuskripte*, §72 (*Sämtliche Werke*, ed. P. Deussen, Vol. XI).

he hoped would one day astonish the world. As at all times, he regularly attended concerts and went to the theatre (he compared not going to plays with trying to dress without a looking-glass), and he also made frequent visits to the galleries of the town, particularly admiring Raphael's picture, the *Madonna di San Sisto.* There were, moreover, what his nineteenth-century English biographer, Wallace, archly referred to as 'other attractions'. Schopenhauer never denied that the qualities of character and temperament to which he accorded the highest place in his writings were not ones that he himself possessed; a prey from early childhood to irrational anxieties and fits of nervous panic springing from a deepseated sense of insecurity, the calmness and detachment he extolled in his philosophy were not to be discerned in his own disposition; nor, equally, was his manner of life in any way remarkable for asceticism or abstinence. He was a man of strong passions, the misogynistic sentiments he later expressed in his notorious essay, *On Women,* not preventing him from seeking out their company or having brief affairs; from time to time he even contemplated marriage, although never perhaps very seriously. When he died there were found among his papers a number of autobiographical reflections on sexual love, these being written not in German but in a plain and forceful English; they were however not allowed to survive by his executor, who thought them unsuitable for publication and burnt them, in accordance with what he claimed to have been Schopenhauer's last oral instructions.

By 1818 the book was complete and, after a somewhat undignified wrangle with the publisher, was printed at the end of the same year. Schopenhauer sent a copy to Goethe, who referred approvingly to some of the things said in the sections on art and on self-knowledge; but otherwise it received only scanty and (with the exception of one by Jean Paul) rather tepid reviews, presaging the long period of obscurity and isolation which now followed for its author. Eighteen months later, on the strength of his published works, and after undergoing a viva voce examination during which he claimed to have had the satisfaction of catching out Hegel, Schopenhauer took the post

of lecturer in philosophy at Berlin. Unfortunately he chose as his lecturing hours those at which Hegel (who had succeeded to Fichte's chair) himself lectured, and partly as a result of this bold but imprudent step his course quickly collapsed for lack of an audience. Thus concluded his one and only attempt to establish himself within the academic profession: from then onwards he retired into himself, a bitter and implacable enemy of what he scornfully described as the official philosophy of his time – for Hegelianism had, in his view, corrupted the hearts and minds of an entire generation of German intellectuals. He had at least the consolation of not being financially in need of employment, although there was a period of anxiety on this score when the Danzig firm in which a large part of his father's inheritance was invested was threatened with bankruptcy. In his methods of dealing with the crisis Schopenhauer showed a hard-headedness and business acumen which suggests that he might after all have made a success of the career originally envisaged for him: as a result the money was recovered and a comfortable private income for the rest of his life assured. Less effective were his efforts to extricate himself at about the same time from an action brought against him by a seamstress. Schopenhauer was always acutely sensitive to noise of any form, and the woman in question had irritated him by gossiping outside his room when he was living in lodgings in Berlin; losing his temper, he had forcibly driven her downstairs, causing her to injure her arm in a way (she alleged) which rendered her incapable of continuing to earn her livelihood. The consequences of this not very creditable episode dogged him for many years; eventually, when the case was finally decided, he was ordered to pay five-sixths of the cost of the suit, and every quarter to supply the woman with a sum of money as a contribution to her maintenance. When, many years later, the old woman died, Schopenhauer's comment, which he inscribed upon her death-certificate, was characteristic: '*Obit anus, abit onus*' ('The old woman dies, the burden departs').

The remainder of Schopenhauer's life was uneventful and spent largely in solitude. While still in Berlin he entertained

two main projects, neither of which was to be fulfilled. One was the translation of Hume's *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* (a work he greatly admired) into German: the other was a proposal which he made to the publishers of an English periodical, the *Foreign Review*, to translate Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* into English. In retrospect, it appears a general misfortune that the latter suggestion met with no response; Schopenhauer had considerable gifts as a translator, his knowledge of English was good, and he displayed a deeper and more sympathetic understanding of Kant's aims in writing the *Critique* than most of his contemporaries. But whatever disappointment he may have felt on this subject was shortly overtaken by a more pressing anxiety. In 1831 cholera broke out in Berlin, carrying off Hegel as one of its victims, and Schopenhauer, at all times obsessively concerned with his health, removed himself from the city with the utmost speed. He finally settled in Frankfurt, which he chose partly for its climate and the good reputation of its doctors, partly for the quality of its plays, operas, and concerts, and remained there until his death twenty-seven years afterwards. The comparative tranquillity he found at Frankfurt allowed him to return once more to writing. He never deviated from the belief that the principal contentions he had put forward in his main work were unassailably true, standing in need of expansion rather than of correction, and accordingly confined himself to developing and elaborating themes already announced in *The World as Will and Idea*. In 1836 he published *On the Will in Nature*, and three years later was awarded a prize offered by the Scientific Society at Trondheim in Norway for an essay on the freedom of the will. The latter book, together with one called *On the Foundation of Morality* (which much to his chagrin had been denied a prize by the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences), was subsequently published, in a volume entitled *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, in 1841. Then in 1844 he brought out a second edition of his main work, enormously enlarged by the addition of fifty supplementary chapters and containing substantial revisions in the sections dealing with Kant's philosophy; and in 1847 a

revised and augmented edition of his original doctoral thesis appeared.

It was only, however, with the publication in 1851 of a collection of essays under the title of *Parerga and Paralipomena*, ranging from long pieces on university philosophy and religion to brief articles and aphorisms on literary or psychological topics, that he at last began to attract the interest which he had felt so long to be his due. Yet even here Schopenhauer met with initial difficulties and disappointments. The book was successively refused by three different publishers, and it was only through the mediation of Julius Frauenstädt, his close friend and follower during the last thirteen years of his life and the posthumous editor of his collected works, that Hayn of Berlin was in the end induced to produce it, paying the author with ten free copies of his own work. Two years later an article, entitled 'Iconoclasm in German Philosophy', was printed in the *Westminster Review*; written by John Oxenford, it treated Schopenhauer as an ally in the battle nineteenth-century empiricists in England, such as John Stuart Mill, had been carrying on against theological prejudice and transcendent theorizing of the kind to which Coleridge and his followers, under the spell of German metaphysics, were held to have been addicted. This article was reproduced in translation in the German liberal newspaper, the *Vossische Zeitung*, and it did much to bring Schopenhauer's name to public notice at a moment when the influence of Hegel in German universities was already on the wane. From that time onwards Schopenhauer's reputation spread rapidly. Discussions of his philosophy appeared in French and Italian academic periodicals, while in Denmark he attracted the attention of Sören Kierkegaard: in his journals Kierkegaard praised him for being 'rude as only a German can be' about 'Hegelian philosophy and the whole of donnish philosophy' and saw in him 'unquestionably an important writer . . . who, in spite of complete disagreement, touches me at so many points'.[1] In 1856 the University of Leipzig offered a prize for the best exposition and criticism of his ideas, and by 1857 his doctrines were (ironically enough)

1. *The Journals of Sören Kierkegaard*, trans. A. Dru, 1319ff.

made the subject of university lectures in Jena, Bonn, and Breslau. When he died, on 21 September 1860, it is fair to say that he had become the centre of a kind of cult, with a dedicated inner ring of loyal disciples and with an ever-growing circle of admirers as far afield as England, Russia, and the United States.

Despite the neglect which his work suffered until his last years, Schopenhauer's life was not without compensations. He was sufficiently well off to indulge his taste for food and wine, and he enjoyed travel, particularly in Italy, which he adored. He read widely, with a considerable knowledge of Spanish and Italian as well as French and English literature; but while he regularly looked at *The Times*, he cannot be said to have been deeply interested in the political issues of his day. A strong believer in individual liberty, he none the less distrusted democracy, and the events of 1848 greatly unnerved him. Although he always lived alone, he was by no means averse to conversation with sympathetic companions, and seems to have been an energetic and entertaining talker, caustic and satirical; those who visited him after he had become famous were often surprised to find him a good deal more approachable than they had been led to suppose. He dressed carefully, with a certain elegance; his rooms, on the other hand, were furnished very simply, with little in the way of ornament except a statue of Buddha and a bust of Kant that stood on his writing desk.

If, during the years immediately preceding his death, Schopenhauer was already beginning to be widely known both within and outside his own country, the influence his ideas exerted upon the thought of his age – an influence extending beyond the boundaries of philosophy itself and with repercussions in spheres as far removed as those of art and music – enormously increased as the century wore on: thus by the 1890s it could confidently be asserted before an audience at Harvard that he was generally better known than 'any other modern Continental metaphysician, except Kant'.[1] Today,

1. Josiah Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 228.

however, the situation is different. As with other dominant representatives of nineteenth-century philosophy, the attitude adopted towards him is startlingly at variance with the atmosphere of respect, amounting in some quarters to veneration, which surrounded his name not so very long ago.

The reasons for this altered state of things are many. To a considerable extent it can be put down to the general decrease of interest in metaphysical speculation which has characterized the development of philosophy (at least in Britain and the United States) since the turn of the century. But in Schopenhauer's case certain other more specific factors have contributed to the decline of his reputation, including a group of rather oddly-assorted assumptions about the actual scope and nature of his writings. Since these seem to have gained a fair degree of popular credence, it will be as well to begin by considering some of them.

It is not, for example, uncommon to find it asserted that Schopenhauer chiefly deserves to be remembered as the composer of a collection of scattered aphorisms and observations concerning human life and character. But these, though neatly and pointedly expressed and often undeniably penetrating, are (it may be said) at best of a purely literary or belletristic interest, and certainly give no support to the claim that he is worthy of serious philosophical attention. On any interpretation of the function of philosophy, a philosopher must necessarily be more than a mere sharp but limited commentator on certain aspects of human manners and affairs.

To this picture of him as primarily an elegant and cultivated *littérateur*, a useful source for essayists in search of a handy theme or quotation, there may be added other, though very different, notions of Schopenhauer's place in the history of thought. It appears sometimes to be supposed, for instance, that he was one of the chief originators of sinister modern ideologies like National Socialism, not only by assigning a pre-eminent place in his system to conceptions like 'the will to power', but also, in common with other German thinkers of his period, by seeking subtly to undermine and discredit that 'belief in reason' which is held to have played such a

central and meritorious role in the thinking and speculation of the previous two centuries. And on the basis of assumptions like these, it is easy to move to the belief that he was an influential enemy of values commonly regarded as forming the keystone of what is most worth preserving in our civilization – an opponent of humanistic ideals and a ruthless critic of the intellectual outlook which has made both scientific advance and political and social progress possible. Such a position, it may moreover be argued, is not unacceptable on moral grounds alone: it is also exposed to a more specific objection, in that it amounts to a rejection of the very conditions presupposed by all philosophical inquiry as properly conceived. Denial of the claims of reason is denial of philosophy itself.

As a kind of variant on the view of Schopenhauer as the advocate of a fundamentally irrationalist and nihilist *Weltanschauung*, hostile to traditional European values, there is a further conception of his position which has also achieved currency and may be mentioned. According to this, Schopenhauer derived his principal ideas from the texts of Oriental religions and cults; thus his metaphysics sprang in the first instance from sources which have little or no relevance to the logical and epistemological problems that have typically occupied the attention of Western thinkers, and can in consequence be regarded as little more than a sort of exotic or freak growth in the evolution of European speculation, in essentials unrelated to issues that have constituted the central themes of Western philosophy. It must, in fact, be seen as representing the intrusion into our native intellectual world of a basically alien element, and should be treated as such.

Here then are three pictures, all of which – though in different ways – tend to give the impression that, whatever interest or appeal Schopenhauer's work may have from other standpoints and in different contexts, philosophically considered it is of no real importance; an impression that possibly gains some reinforcement from the fact that his name is often vaguely linked with those of other contemporary or near-contemporary figures, like Byron, Leopardi, and Nietzsche – names heavy with emotional associations, and symbolic of

Romantic moods and attitudes in which 'imagination' or 'instinct' seem characteristically to be accorded precedence over the intellectual and reasoning sides of our natures. To suggest that such conceptions of what Schopenhauer said and wrote are lacking in *any* kind of foundation would be incorrect; it would, indeed, be surprising if they bore absolutely no connexion with the truth. But popular beliefs about past philosophers are notoriously unreliable, especially when the thinker in question is one whose opinions at one time attracted much attention, subsequently falling into neglect; in such circumstances it is almost inevitable that an accretion of legend should have formed around his name. And it is certainly the case that the views sketched above are to a large extent compounded of important errors, misconstructions, and faulty interpretations, some of which can quite quickly be disposed of.

In the first place, it is mistaken to treat Schopenhauer as a purely peripheral figure, with no more than a surface interest in the problems that have always (in one form or another) fascinated European philosophers. It is true that he wrote with immense distinction and style, and that he took pains not to encumber his paragraphs with clumsy technical expressions and jargon; in this respect his writing stands in marked contrast with that of his German contemporaries – Schelling and Fichte, for instance. But only through a confusion of obscurity with profundity would it be possible to regard this feature of Schopenhauer's work as evidence of superficiality or lack of seriousness: what he himself said on the matter is perhaps worth quoting here.

> The true philosopher [he wrote] will indeed always seek after light and perspicuity, and will strive to resemble a Swiss lake – which through its calm is enabled to unite great depth with great clearness, the depth revealing itself precisely by reason of the clearness – rather than a turbid, impetuous mountain torrent. '*La clarté est la bonne foi des philosophes*', as Vauvenargues says. Pseudo-philosophers, on the contrary, use words, not indeed to conceal their thoughts, as Talleyrand has it, but rather to conceal the absence of them, and are apt to make their readers responsible for the incomprehensibility of their systems, which really

springs from their own unclearness of thought. This explains why in certain writers – Schelling, for instance – the didactic tone so repeatedly passes into one of reproach, and frequently the reader is even taken to task beforehand, in anticipation of his incapacity. (*FR* §3)

It is in some ways unfortunate that Schopenhauer first became widely known through the essays collected in *Parerga and Paralipomena*; the selections from these which achieved so much popularity in this country when translated and presented under titles like 'The Wisdom of Life' and 'Counsels and Maxims' give little indication of the range of his knowledge of the history of philosophy, or of the extent to which his own ideas developed out of a consideration of questions that had formed the focus of previous philosophical inquiry and discussion. It is in fact far from true that, because his real interests and talents allegedly lay elsewhere, he was incapable of feeling the force and compulsive character of such questions; on the contrary, his own system can only be understood in the light of the very considerable insight he possessed into some of the difficulties and dilemmas underlying the theories of his great European predecessors. And in the same connexion it is worth pointing out that while he was undeniably acquainted with Indian thought, and went out of his way to stress analogies between some of his conclusions and certain fundamental Hindu conceptions, he claimed at the same time that he had arrived at his results quite independently and with no deliberate purpose of providing a kind of theoretical prop for the Brahman and Buddhist faiths. The latter procedure would indeed have been strictly illegitimate on his own declared principles, involving a misapprehension of what he believed to be the respective roles of religion and philosophy.

What, however, is to be said of the other objections briefly referred to above – those imputing to Schopenhauer power-worship, irrationalism, and so forth? So far as the first is concerned, it can be said at once that the suggestion that his writings contain doctrines exalting the 'will to power' is an exceedingly odd one, if only because he nowhere even goes

so far as to mention such an entity, let alone to give it his blessing. The concept of *will* itself is certainly integral to his philosophical system, and (as we shall see) difficulties arise when attempts are made to elucidate exactly what the notion involves in his use of it. But although Schopenhauer admittedly spoke of what he called 'the will' as a blind striving power, he never referred to it as a striving *to* power, and the belief that the latter is what he really meant presumably stems in part from a confused identification of his ideas with those of Nietzsche, who indeed wrote that 'life itself is *Will to Power*' and who conceived of psychology as the 'morphology' of the 'will to power'.[1] It is also true of Nietzsche that he did in a sense glorify strength or power as such, and that he condemned certain moralities (for example, Christian ethics) as 'slave-moralities'. But it should be remembered that Nietzsche, though deriving much early inspiration from Schopenhauer, in his later work showed himself to be one of the latter's sharpest critics, particularly with regard to the Schopenhauerian doctrine of the will. Further, it is far from being the case that Schopenhauer applauded the workings of the ultimate principle of which he spoke; the reverse in fact is true, all his conclusions pointing in precisely the opposite direction. Nor can he (as Nietzsche can) plausibly be represented as hostile to accepted moral standards.

The charge of irrationalism is more difficult to meet, partly because of the very vagueness and ambiguity of the phrase 'belief in reason' itself, partly because Schopenhauer's own use of the term 'reason' (*Vernunft*) is not always as clear-cut as it might be. But here again certain distinctions ought to be made.

First, Schopenhauer undoubtedly subscribed to the view that a man's actions are not – as he thought most philosophers and moralists have assumed them to be – subject to the direction of a free and controlling 'intellect', capable of moulding his character and guiding his behaviour according to principles which in the light of dispassionate and rational assessment can be seen to be those he should follow: he rejected the entire

1. F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Ch. 1.

picture of human nature and ethical responsibility which lay behind this idea. On the other hand, it is quite a different thing to maintain, as some to whom the label of 'irrationalist' is attached have done, that a special virtue belongs to instinctual or impulsive behaviour as such, and that in deciding what to do one should always take the course of obeying the primal urgings of 'the blood' rather than of paying heed to the dictates of 'reason'. The latter is certainly not a position that can be attributed to Schopenhauer; nor does it in any way follow from his general analysis of human motivation and of the status of intellect and reason in relation to conduct.

'Belief in reason' may, however, be understood to mean something quite distinct from this. It may, for example, be used to refer to the conviction that by a process of deductive inference from self-evident *a priori* premisses it is possible to arrive at fundamental truths concerning the Universe and man's place within it. Schopenhauer regarded some such assumption as underlying all the so-called 'rationalist' metaphysics of the seventeenth century, and he utterly repudiated it. But he did so on grounds that seemed to him to be in the strictest sense 'rational', namely, by an appeal to irrefutable philosophical argument. By a proper attention to the conditions which govern all valid thinking and reasoning it was (he believed) possible to show just what was wrong with these and similar programmes, and to demonstrate, moreover, that there in fact exist certain specifiable limits or bounds to the area within which philosophical inquiry may legitimately be carried out and significant or fruitful questions asked. There can thus be said to be ascertainable restrictions upon the scope of possible human cognition. But this thesis does not in itself imply any irrationalist consequences; essentially, it represents the standpoint adopted before Schopenhauer by both Hume and Kant, against whom the reproach of irrationalism is seldom brought. On the contrary, it might be argued that to adhere to it strictly is to refuse to engage in precisely the kind of speculation in which irrationalists are often accused of indulging: for instance, to withhold acceptance from claims to knowledge made on the basis of some alleged faculty of

supra-sensuous awareness or supra-rational intuition. And in this connexion it is at least worth noticing that Schopenhauer reserved some of his most bitter scorn for claims of the kind in question. He insisted, for instance, that they were utterly without warrant; yet, despite everything that had been said in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, German philosophers were once more writing as if they had mysterious access to a type of knowledge Kant had shown to be in principle impossible. The source of this pretended knowledge they referred to ironically enough as 'Reason', using the term, however, to denote something quite different from that which it has traditionally been understood to mean, for in their hands it refers to 'a wholly imaginary, fictitious faculty', 'a little window opening on to the ... supernatural world, through which all those truths are handed to us, ready cut and dried, concerning which previous old-fashioned honest ... reason had for centuries vainly toiled and disputed' (*FR* §34). The consequences of such a development, in Schopenhauer's eyes, had been wholly disastrous, in that German 'so-called philosophy' had come to be based upon a faculty which was in truth no more than a piece of metaphysical invention; theologically-minded professors of the universities and academies, who had previously been gravely embarrassed by Kant's anti-dogmatic conclusions, proved only too ready to accept such a device as providing a means of passing off the propositions of established religion 'somehow or other, *per fas aut nefas*, for the results of philosophy' (ibid.). But philosophy had no right, once investigation showed certain routes to be closed, to 'cast all honesty and scrupulousness aside, and like a rascal take to secret ways': instead, it should recognize its limitations and henceforth – without deceit and in a spirit of perfect disinterestedness – follow only those paths which still lay open to it.

I shall not attempt to evaluate the justice or accuracy of the criticisms Schopenhauer levelled against his philosophical compatriots; nor am I at present concerned with the question of how far similar strictures could be directed against certain aspects of his own philosophical procedure. All that need be

stressed here is that Schopenhauer undoubtedly believed that he – almost alone among philosophers in early nineteenth-century Germany – had had the courage and integrity to subscribe to the high ideal he laid down; he had pursued his work in an open-minded and unprejudiced manner and without fearing lest what he wrote, through its lack of conformity with prevailing beliefs and 'respectable' academic opinion, should militate against his chances of professional advancement and success. His most usual complaints against his contemporaries take the form of accusing them not merely of self-deception but of actual dishonesty; they culpably mystified their readers by using language in an unintelligible manner, so that in Hegel's case at least it was a matter of the author writing the words and the reader being left with the task of finding a meaning for them. By contrast, Schopenhauer prided himself on two things: he had not, in his thinking, set out with certain fixed dogmas or preconceived ideas in mind, believing that these must, by whatever means, be shown to be true; and secondly, he had tried to express himself clearly and to eschew the cloudy terminology behind which theorists too often seek to hide the errors and illogicalities in their thinking, so that what he wrote could be put to the test of serious criticism and discussion. Whatever else may be said about them, such claims at least seem to exhibit a concern with values not naturally associated with an irrationalist or anti-rationalist attitude or cast of mind.

In making these preliminary comments, I have been concerned solely to try to remove certain misconceptions regarding Schopenhauer's doctrines and approach to philosophy which may have contributed to present-day lack of interest. It would, of course, be quite wrong to conclude from them that he can be represented instead as being, for example, a kind of nineteenth-century upholder of the ideals of the Enlightenment; such a picture would be absurd, if only because it would betray a blindness to the various tensions that lie beneath his philosophical position, tensions which, while they account for features in his work that have undeniably repelled some readers, have seemed to others to give to his

system a strange fascination. It is these complexities that in general make it peculiarly difficult to 'place' him, to fit him into one or other of the pigeon-holes, with labels like 'subjectivist', 'materialist', 'realist', and so on, which historians of philosophy are fond of using. For the truth is that he was a highly individual thinker, and attempts to portray him as falling neatly within the confines of some familiar philosophical 'school' or 'movement' will therefore always seem to be particularly inept.

There is, however, one respect in which what he wrote might appear to fall clearly enough into line with many other famous philosophical theories of the past. For it undoubtedly expresses a comprehensive vision of reality – a vision Schopenhauer believed that anyone who reflected carefully and objectively must come to accept as authentic and final – and is put forward with the aim of providing a unitary all-embracing scheme in which everything has its place and can be accounted for. It is a commonplace that many philosophers today show no inclination to undertake enterprises of this kind, and in a critical age, when it has become the practice to tackle philosophical questions piecemeal and in detail, there is some difficulty in achieving an imaginative grasp of the motives and hopes that inspired the construction of such systems. Schopenhauer, on the other hand, belonged to an age when synoptic theories of the type in question still represented a natural mode of expressing fresh or revolutionary ideas and of challenging or disputing long-established habits of thought. Yet, while that is so, he was also in some respects a transitional figure in the history of modern speculation. He was, as we have seen, deeply conscious of the power of Kant's criticisms of all attempts to transcend the limits of ordinary human cognition, and it is therefore understandable that metaphysics should have presented itself to him not as a datum, a self-evidently valid type of inquiry with its own unambiguously identifiable subject-matter and methods, but rather in the form of a problem – a problem moreover to which he returned again and again in various of his writings. And this self-conscious obsession with the nature and possible scope of metaphysical thinking

does, I think, serve to distinguish him in important ways from earlier system-builders. He constantly gives the impression, in the course of setting out his own theory, of being at the same time occupied with the questions of what it is exactly that he is doing and of what constitutes a true conception of the nature and status of metaphysical knowledge: problems which, despite some of his more confident assertions, he perhaps never really resolved to his satisfaction.

There is, however, one suggestion that recurs in much that he wrote on the subject; this could, in a certain sense, even be said to be implicit in the account offered in the Preface to the first edition of *The World as Will and Idea* of how he intends his book to be read. There he speaks of what he has written as being essentially the expression of a 'single thought', and goes on to say of this thought that 'if it admits of being broken up into parts to facilitate its communication, the connexion between these parts must yet be organic, i.e. it must be a connexion in which every part supports the whole just as much as it is supported by the whole, a connexion in which there is no first part and no last, in which the whole gains in clearness from every part, and even the smallest part cannot be completely understood until the whole has already been comprehended' (I, p. viii). From such a description it is clear that Schopenhauer did not think of his work as having the form of a logical demonstration or deductive proof; it is not in terms of comparisons drawn from the field of mathematics (for example) that its structure should be characterized. On the other hand, if we are looking for analogies, it might be suggested that the one that offers itself most readily is to be found in the notion of a work of art, where the conception of pervasive themes and of elements contributing 'organically' to the whole is also present. And, however this may be, it is anyway true that the idea of there being important connexions between philosophy and art was one that from the first pressed itself upon him. In the early notebooks which he kept, he suggested that the reason philosophy had so often in the past appeared to engage in fruitless endeavour lay in its having been pursued in the manner of a science rather than as a form of

art, the philosopher being in one way a kind of artist;[1] and somewhat similar notions, though expressed in a more qualified and guarded fashion, are to be found in his main work. The view that in some – though not all – of its aspects the metaphysician's activity may fruitfully be compared with that of the artist has been put forward on a number of occasions in more recent times,[2] and is consequently now a fairly familiar one. But when Schopenhauer wrote this was not so: here, as in other respects, it is as well to approach him unencumbered by preconceived opinions about his standpoint and aims.

1. *Erstlingsmanuskripte*, §§190 and 236; cf. also §§386 and 399.
2. See e.g. F. Waismann, 'How I See Philosophy', in *Contemporary British Philosophy*, ed. H. D. Lewis, 1956.

CHAPTER TWO

The Possibility of Metaphysics

'A MAN becomes a philosopher by reason of a certain perplexity, from which he seeks to free himself . . . But what distinguishes the false philosopher from the true is this: the perplexity of the latter arises from the contemplation of the world itself, while that of the former results from some book, some system of philosophy which lies before him.' Schopenhauer was not alone in characterizing the metaphysical frame of mind as being essentially one of original perplexity or (as he refers to it elsewhere) wonder; wonder 'concerning the world and our own existence, inasmuch as these press upon the intellect as a riddle, the solution of which therefore occupies mankind without intermission' (II, p. 372). To be impressed by the fact that things are as they are and not otherwise, to find it strange or marvellous that there should be anything at all: this, Schopenhauer and others have wished to insist, is the mark of a certain type of outlook, a certain type of temperament, not shared by all; and for one unable to understand or enter into such an attitude, for whom 'the world and existence appear as a matter of course', the theories and doctrines propounded by metaphysicians would seem, not merely unintelligible in themselves, but without ground, without reason; the metaphysical quest itself would seem an enigma, and he could only view with indifference attempts to solve what to him must appear as non-existent problems and difficulties. All the same, Schopenhauer believed that total inability to feel the force of fundamental questions such as those that have in one way or another occupied the attention of philosophers throughout the ages is in fact rare. The kind of approach to the world he had in mind was not, he thought, confined to the relatively sophisticated; it was also to be found among the simple and ignorant, although it was true that it manifested itself in exceedingly different forms. Such an attitude towards

experience is, in other words, deeply founded in our character and make-up as human beings, and accounts for the continuous survival of metaphysical thinking as an activity capable of retaining its hold upon the human mind and imagination; it is 'the pendulum which keeps the clock of metaphysics in motion'.

The Metaphysical Urge

To say that there is a deeprooted tendency in human nature to ask ultimate questions about the world as a whole or to raise issues about the meaning and purpose of human existence is one thing; it is another to explain this tendency; and it is another thing again to justify it. So far as explanation was concerned, Schopenhauer put forward a number of different considerations at various places in his writings, all of which could be said to suggest possible sources of the disposition to regard the world as a problem that demanded solution. There was, however, one point upon which he laid special emphasis. It concerns the knowledge men have of the inevitability of death, together with their awareness of 'the suffering and misery of life'. The combination of the two was regarded by him as providing perhaps the most powerful stimulus to the desire to find a metaphysical interpretation of existence. 'If our life were endless and painless, it would perhaps occur to no one to ask why the world exists and is just the kind of world it is; but everything would just be taken as a matter of course' (II, p. 360). But death and suffering are undeniable realities. It might of course be the case that, even so, we should not be troubled in this way if the world were (as some philosophers have claimed) 'an absolutely necessary existence'. For then it would be something which embraced within itself 'not only all actual but all possible existence, so that, as Spinoza indeed declares, its possibility and its actuality would be absolutely one' (ibid., p. 373). We should then regard it as something which could not but exist, and which moreover could not be conceived of as being different from what it is: its existence and character could in no sense be thought away, and the same would apply to our own place in and relations to the

world. Hence there could be no question of our regarding it as 'remarkable, problematical, and indeed as the unfathomable and ever-disquieting riddle': on the contrary, we should 'necessarily be as little conscious of its existence *as such*, i.e. as a problem for reflection, as we are of the incredibly fast motion of our planet' (ibid., p. 373). Such ideas, however, quite apart from the logical difficulties they raise, seem to be manifestly untrue to what we instinctively realize to be the case. We can conceive of the world's being other than it is, we can conceive that it might not have existed at all – there is no impossibility in doing either. Hence questions about the grounds and sense of the world are free to arise, and they seem naturally to force themselves upon us at every stage: 'not merely that the world exists, but still more that it is such a wretched world' – this is the torturing problem of metaphysics.

Among other things, considerations of the type described help to explain (Schopenhauer thinks) why systems which assume or attempt to establish the reality of continued existence after death always excite the keenest interest and receive the greatest general approval. Such systems usually involve additional claims concerning the existence of creative or superintending agencies lying above or outside the world – gods, for example. But it should not be thought that it is this which always gives them their principal attraction and appeal. True, men have in general come to view theistic beliefs and beliefs in personal immortality as being inseparably connected with one another. But they are logically quite distinct; and if in fact one could establish the reality of immortality, in a way that did not require the postulation of a deity capable of preserving us in being after we die, the enthusiasm which many people at present feel for their gods would, Schopenhauer suggests, quickly cool. And for similar reasons he argues that 'materialistic' or 'sceptical' systems and theories, which seek to deny or cast doubt upon the validity of immortality-doctrines, have never been able to achieve a wide or lasting hold upon men's minds.

From all this it might be supposed that Schopenhauer was

primarily concerned to offer an account of what prompts *religious* rather than *philosophical* speculation about the nature of the world. He certainly believed that the religious and philosophical urges in man both spring from the disquiet human beings feel when they contemplate the reality which confronts them, the conditions that govern their lives and experience. Philosophy, like religion, arises from the demand for an 'interpretation of life', and unless this is recognized, the main philosophical systems of the past cannot be understood, since it is impossible to cut them loose from the profound psychological and moral needs they are in one way or another concerned to satisfy. But, while insisting on the importance of the foregoing, he was far from wishing to assimilate philosophy to religion. To say that certain forms of thinking ultimately stem from a common root is not to imply that they may not differ profoundly in other respects; and, although Schopenhauer was (somewhat confusingly) prepared to call both religion and philosophy 'metaphysics', he none the less drew a very definite distinction between them. Thus religion may be termed the 'metaphysics of the people', on analogy with the 'poetry of the people' (ballads, for instance) and the 'wisdom of the people' (proverbial wisdom). Its evidence and credentials lie 'outside itself', in the sense that it depends upon 'revelation, which is authenticated by signs and miracles', rather than upon thought and reflection: on this account it is above all intended for what Schopenhauer considers to be the great majority of mankind, 'who are not capable of thinking but only of believing' and who are not moved by reasons but only by authority. When it comes to argument, he suggests that the upholders of religious doctrines tend to fall back upon threats of some kind (the *ultima ratio theologorum*), whether these be threats of eternal punishment in some other sphere or ones of a more immediate and mundane character – 'the stake or things like it'. To say this, however, is not to deny that religions may serve a useful purpose in human life and society, nor is it even to withhold from them any kind of validity. Certainly to treat them as expressing truths in any straightforward sense leads to insuperable

difficulties; one is confronted by fantastic assertions, together with dogmas which 'cannot even be distinctly thought' (II, p. 367). It must be allowed, too, that most religions tend to flourish at periods when the general level of knowledge is low and when, because of the prevalence of ignorance and superstition, it is easier to accept what they say at its face value: 'like glow-worms, they need darkness in order to shine' (*Parerga*, II, p. 369). At such times men's desires for what it is not in their power to obtain, and their fears of things they cannot by their own efforts defend themselves against, make them more than ever ready to cling to the hope that there may exist supernatural agencies which can be induced to intervene on their behalf by prayer or entreaty: thus the appeal which many religious doctrines undeniably possess is to be ascribed to human passion or desire rather than to rational or intellectual conviction. But it is possible, all the same, to look at religious beliefs in another and less unsympathetic way; and from this point of view Schopenhauer put forward the suggestion, familiar in our own day but less so in his, that religions are most plausibly interpreted as 'allegories'. So conceived, they may be viewed, for instance, primarily in ethical terms, as ways of impressing upon us in a vivid and memorable form the moral relations in which we stand to one another; hence many religious dogmas can be said primarily to relate to the earthly field of conduct and social existence. As he made one of the disputants say in his imaginary dialogue, *On Religion*:

> There must be . . . a public standard of right and virtue, it must always flutter high overhead. In the end it is all one and the same what heraldic figures appear on it, provided only they signify what is meant. (*Parerga*, II, p. 354)

Nor is this all. Religions may also, in their own strange fashion, be regarded as giving voice to the obscure sense we are wont to have that 'behind the physical in the world there must be a metaphysical' – a feeling which, in ordinary terms, we find it almost impossible to express or clearly articulate. From this standpoint the fact that many religious statements

seem to involve absurdities, or even downright contradictions, need no longer be a source of surprise. Rather, it may well appear to be an understandable feature of such assertions; for inasmuch as religion endeavours to concern itself with an order of things beyond the scope of everyday experience and discourse, 'not only the contradictory but also the comprehensible dogmas [of religious teaching]' are really nothing more than 'allegories and accommodations to the human power of comprehension' (II, p. 368). On this interpretation, we exhibit a misunderstanding of the role and purpose of religion if we demand lucidity and rationality; the point of its teachings is to make people *feel* certain things which lie beyond the grasp of their purely intellectual faculties, and in order to perform this function it uses whatever imaginative resources may lie to hand.

Schopenhauer maintains, however, that with philosophy things are very different. The latter has its evidence 'in itself', and by this he partly means that, in so far as philosophy constitutes an attempt to solve the problems which the world and our existence in it present, it must do so in a way that is open to reflective appraisal and does not involve a blind appeal to authority or revelation. It is of the essence of philosophical inquiry that results should be *arrived at* in a clear and intelligible manner, even if the truths the philosopher seeks to communicate are themselves *au fond* simple ones (as Schopenhauer more than once suggests they will be – *Simplex sigillum veri*). Moreover, it is stressed that philosophical conclusions and assertions are always put forward as being in the strictest sense true – true *sensu proprio* as contrasted with *sensu allegorico* – and must be evaluated as such. If this is so, it is obvious that only confusion and muddle will follow upon a failure to distinguish clearly between religious and philosophical modes of thinking and speaking – as the history of metaphysical speculation amply and continually demonstrates. For, on the one hand, philosophers have regularly shown a disposition to bring about some kind of fusion of the two, with the consequence that they have carried over concepts and ideas from one field to the other without giving thought to the

question of the legitimacy of such a procedure. And, on the other hand, representatives of established religions have in their turn encroached upon the sphere of philosophy, with the undisguised purpose of securing 'inner' or rational authentication for their teachings in a manner that would show these teachings to be *sensu proprio* true: e.g. the belief that the universe has been created by a personal god with certain intelligible purposes in view must be exhibited as being at least as worthy of acceptance as the belief that it contains thousands of stars. Such an ambition, Schopenhauer thinks, may well strike one as pointless and unnecessary: an established religion does not *need* the help of philosophy – has it not already everything on its side, 'revelation, documents, miracles, prophecies, the protection of government . . . the consent and reverence of all', and (last but not least) 'the invaluable privilege of being able to imprint its doctrines on the mind at the tender age of childhood, whereby they become almost innate ideas' (II, p. 367)? Yet he was of course perfectly aware that these ironical concessions would not satisfy a believer who wished to see the propositions of his faith finally and indisputably established in the form in which they were popularly understood and accepted: the fact remained, nevertheless, that any attempt to meet such a demand could only result in a type of undertaking that both in intention and spirit was incompatible with the nature and scope of philosophy as truly conceived. For philosophy could not be regarded as an instrument to be utilized in the service of something other than itself, nor treated as a means of giving additional support to contentions already subscribed to on independent grounds; the tenets of religion could never justifiably be viewed by a philosopher as something *given*, which it was his task to establish and vindicate. Although the conclusions to which he was led as a result of his own reflection might be analogous, in *some* respects, to ideas which – in a veiled and figurative form – found expression in certain religious doctrines, it was essential that he should have reached them freely and independently, uninfluenced by any desire to provide a basis for a previously-accepted creed or dogma. And this was to say,

amongst other things, that his procedure should be quite different from that which Schopenhauer accused the university professors of his time of following. For they, having fallen under the spell of Hegel's 'verbiage', had evolved the practice of borrowing familiar dogmas and notions from the religion of their country, and of dressing these up in the obscure jargon of the 'Absolute': as a result, they were to be found talking of 'nothing but God, explaining how, why, wherefore, by what voluntary or involuntary process, he created or brought forth the world, showing whether he is within or without it, and so forth, just as if philosophy were theology and as if it sought for enlightenment concerning God, not concerning the world' (*FR* §20). But what was the excuse for all this? In the Christian religion the existence of a deity is presupposed at the start, being regarded as something beyond serious question. Philosophy, on the other hand, 'has no articles of faith', and, as a form of investigation which should aim at the truth *sensu proprio* and should do so in a clear and intelligible manner, it has no right to concern itself with entities and agencies the very nature of which is obscure. German professors, however, showed no appreciation of this; instead of volunteering an explanation of exactly what it was they were referring to when they held forth upon their favourite themes, they preferred to keep it hidden behind an 'edifice of words', so that scarcely a tip could be seen (*Parerga*, I, p. 122).

Observations of this sort concerning the relation between religious and philosophical thinking are to be found in all Schopenhauer's main writings. Central to them is the belief that religions are not what they are all too often taken to be, repositories of knowledge about things that lie 'outside the world', for of such things there *can* be no knowledge. At the same time he thought that it could not be denied that the assumption that they are repositories of such knowledge has exercised an immense influence upon the direction taken by philosophical speculation, and that it is only possible fully to understand a great deal of traditional metaphysical theorizing with this in mind. Certainly it seems to be true that many metaphysical systems have in fact been constructed in the

confidence that they can establish conclusions of the highest importance for ethics and religion, thereby silencing sceptics and reassuring the faithful; to this extent Schopenhauer may well have been justified in stressing the manner in which theological interests had tended to affect the pattern taken by such thinking. But whether or not his diagnosis is accepted as correct, it is in the light of his rejection of the idea that philosophy should try to provide a theoretical foundation for theological dogmas that his own conception of the proper scope and aims of philosophical reflection is most conveniently approached.

Kant and Schopenhauer

I have already indicated that it was Kant who in Schopenhauer's opinion had made plain exactly how philosophers had been led astray in their attempts to establish the truth of propositions concerning such matters as the nature and existence of God, and what it was that rendered their efforts necessarily vain. Schopenhauer claimed that he owed what was best in his own philosophy to the impression produced upon him by the ideas of Plato and Kant, and the influence of the latter can certainly be detected in an enormous amount of his work. It would be incorrect, though, to think that his attitude to Kant was one of uncritical adulation: thus, as an appendix to *The World as Will and Idea*, he wrote a long and very detailed 'Criticism of the Kantian Philosophy', in which he undertook to expose and correct certain important errors which in his view marred Kant's statement of his doctrines; and to the main tenets of Kant's moral theory he remained throughout his life generally opposed. But for Kant the 'all-destroyer', the devastating analyst who had conclusively exploded the pretensions of 'dogmatic' philosophy and against whose *Critique of Pure Reason* 'the most cogent theological argumentation shivers like glass thrown against a wall', he had nothing but praise; nor did he tire of pointing out that it was solely through steadfastly ignoring the real implications of Kant's treatment of human knowledge that professional philosophers at the universities in Germany were able to go

on purveying the doctrines they were paid to disseminate, holding forth in 'volume after volume upon God and the soul, as if these were familiar personalities with whom they were especially intimately acquainted' (*WN*, Preface).

What precisely was it that, in Schopenhauer's opinion, Kant had proved by his destructive arguments? Kant's attack had not, of course, merely been directed against attempted demonstrations of the truth of certain theological propositions; it had been levelled against 'transcendent metaphysics' in general. He had argued, in other words, that it was impossible to establish *any* positive conclusions concerning what lay beyond all possible experience, and hence that every claim to knowledge of the nature of non-empirical reality will necessarily be without foundation, empty. Moreover, it is important to recognize that Kant was not saying that such restrictions on what we are in a position to know are due to certain practical or technical limitations which under other conceivable conditions might not obtain, like our (present) inability to tell whether there is life on Mars; he was ruling, rather, that it is impossible *in principle* that we should acquire knowledge of the kind in question. But how can such a ruling be justified?

Since it is impossible to do justice to Kant's complex and subtle arguments in a few pages, the best course consists in considering those elements in his thinking which Schopenhauer himself singled out as having most deeply influenced the development of his own views.

'*Kant's greatest merit*,' he wrote, '*is the distinction of the phenomenon from the thing in itself*, based upon the proof that between things and us there still always stands the *intellect*, so that they cannot be known as they may be in themselves' (II, p. 6). Previous philosophers, of whom Locke was an outstanding example, had argued that in considering the sources of human knowledge, account must be taken of the ways in which such factors as the operations of our sense-organs contribute to the character of our perceptual experience, and on these grounds had wished to distinguish between things as they really are and things as they appear to us to be. Thus

Locke had argued that although things may seem to us to be coloured, to have tastes or smells, to be warm or cold to the touch, and so forth, the characteristics we thus attribute to them do not really belong to them; the only properties they can truly be said to have are what he called the 'primary' ones, such as size and shape. Kant's analysis, according to Schopenhauer, was undertaken at a still deeper level and in a manner that had far more fruitful consequences for philosophy. For Kant, unlike Locke, had seen that the human mind was not a mere receptacle for sense-impressions and ideas; it could not be treated as no more than a passive medium through which we become conscious of what lies in some not very clear sense 'outside' us. The raw material of our sense-experience is (Kant held) ordered and arranged in certain determinate ways and according to certain determinate rules or principles; and this ordering and arrangement is our own work – it is something we ourselves bring to the bare representations of sense in such a way as to make our normal experience of a coherent objectively-known world possible. As a result of the operations of the mind, conceived as an agency rather than simply as a recipient of discrete sense-impressions, we perceive things as having spatial and temporal characteristics and positions, regard them as acting upon one another according to causal laws, and so on. In other words, even properties which, on a view like that of Locke, could be securely assigned to physical objects as belonging to them independently of our perception of them, have ultimately to be explained by reference to the contribution made by the human understanding. But if this is so, then it is apparent, Schopenhauer thinks, that the traditional manner in which philosophers have been accustomed to view their task is due for a radical reappraisal. For Kant had set in an altogether new light the distinction between *a posteriori* and *a priori* knowledge – between (roughly) the knowledge we acquire through or by experience and the knowledge we possess independently of any experience – and, in so doing, had indicated for the first time the lines along which the true relations that hold between the two should be sought.

It is obvious, in the first place, that Kant, far from wishing to deny or minimize the *a priori* element in our thinking, as some empiricists have tended to do, on the contrary assigns to it a position of extreme importance. Hume and others had been prepared to admit that there are statements which we can be said to know *a priori*, but had implied that knowledge of this kind owes its peculiar character to the fact that the truth of such statements depends solely upon the relations of the ideas or concepts they contain; they do not concern any matter of fact, and hence there can be no question of determining their truth or falsity by appealing to sense-experience in the manner appropriate to *a posteriori* or 'synthetic' judgements. Kant did not wish to deny that there were statements that were *a priori* in this sense, calling such statements *analytic*; he held that a statement or judgement was analytic if the subject of such a judgement already implicity 'contains' the predicate which is ascribed to it, and if the denial of the judgement results in an inconsistency. Thus 'All mothers are female' is analytic, and its denial 'Some mothers are not female' is self-contradictory. Kant was not, however, prepared to concede that the only statements which we can claim to know independently of all experience are statements of this type. Having, as we have seen, pointed out that there are certain forms and categories which we bring to rather than abstract from experience, he went on to show that these forms and categories figure in propositions which we recognize to be valid for all experience: an instance is the proposition 'Every event has a cause'. But such propositions – called by Kant 'synthetic *a priori*' – are nevertheless not such that we can properly speak of their having to be established or confirmed by experience, in the manner of ordinary empirical statements. Rather they are to be interpreted as expressing the conditions under which objective experience as we know it is alone possible, and they cannot therefore be justified by an appeal to particular statements founded upon such experience, since in appeals of this kind their validity is already presupposed. Instead they should be regarded as defining the features which all experience, if it is to be experience of an objective world,

necessarily has. In this sense they underlie all our common sense and scientific thinking about the world, and prescribe in advance the most general ways in which we interpret what is presented to us perceptually.

By arguing that, in addition to purely analytic truths, we must also admit the existence of a separate class of synthetic *a priori* propositions, Kant can thus be said to have significantly extended the area of knowledge we can claim to have independently of experience. And it might be thought that he had incidentally provided support for the belief that metaphysical knowledge of the 'transcendent' kind – that is, knowledge of what lies beyond all possible experience – is obtainable. For did not he himself write in his *Prolegomena* that 'the source of metaphysics must throughout be non-empirical; its fundamental principles and conceptions must never be taken from either inner or outer experience'? And in recognizing the presence in our thought and knowledge of certain *a priori* categories, together with non-tautologous principles that are constitutive of but not derived from our experience, had he not implied that the materials for the attainment of metaphysical results in the requisite sense were ready to hand?

Schopenhauer points out that the answer to this question is a plain 'No', and that to suppose otherwise is to be guilty of a complete misunderstanding of Kant's intentions. For consider first the status of the synthetic *a priori* principles Kant speaks of. Certainly these are to be regarded as 'laws which reign with inviolable necessity in existence, i.e. in experience generally', but that does not mean that they can be 'applied to deduce and explain *existence itself*'; on the contrary, their validity is *relative* to experience and hence only holds when 'the world of experience in general is already established and present . . . consequently these laws cannot be our guide when we come to the explanation of the existence of the world and of ourselves' (II, pp. 9–10). The cardinal error of many previous philosophers consisted precisely in not recognizing this essential point. They had argued, not merely that there were certain eternal truths (*veritates aeternae*), the validity of which was immediately apparent to reason and was thus recognizable

independently of all experience, but – further – that these truths applied to everything without restriction: 'elevated above gods and fate', they were assumed to hold, not only for what lies within the bounds of possible experience, but for what might be presumed to lie outside these bounds as well. And so it seemed legitimate in the light of our knowledge of them to raise and try to answer questions concerning such fundamental matters as whether the world as a whole has a beginning in time, whether there was a cause of its coming into existence, whether we possess immortal souls, and so on. Kant, however, instead of following this well-worn road, which leads straight to transcendent metaphysics and 'dogmatism', went 'beyond the *veritates aeternae* upon which all the previous dogmatism was founded' in order to make 'these truths themselves the objects of investigation' (ibid., p. 11). By adopting this procedure he conclusively showed that their *a priori* validity only extends to what may be for us an object of experience; it is quite illegitimate to use them as a means of reaching conclusions about the non-empirical, for here they can have no proper application. Thus, once Kant had revealed the true role and function of the *a priori* principles in terms of which we think and reason, it became clear why previous philosophers who had striven by the employment of purely rational inquiry to transcend the limits of experience had always failed. For the principles upon which they relied related only to phenomena, and hence were incapable of leading them beyond the sphere of empirical reality. Such philosophers might be compared to squirrels in a cage, trying to advance but in fact only going round and round; or again to persons who thought that if they only went on long enough they would come to the end of the world. Kant, on the other hand, 'had circumnavigated the world and shown that because it is round, one cannot get out of it by horizontal movement' (ibid., p. 10).

The same general considerations apply when the question concerns the status of the categories themselves. What Kant says about these might, like his previous claims concerning the importance of *a priori* principles in knowledge, at first be interpreted as an admission supporting the case for the possi-

bility of a transcendent metaphysics. Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz – the great Rationalist metaphysicians – had all treated as fundamental to their systems certain central concepts, the import of which could be clearly and distinctly grasped by thought alone and without reference to experience: philosophy was thus conceived by them to be 'a science from mere concepts' ('*eine Wissenschaft aus blossen Begriffen*'), in that they believed that by drawing out the implications of the basic notions lying at the foundations of their systems, they could exhibit the underlying structure of reality in a way not requiring appeal to the untrustworthy reports of the senses. But what Kant himself said about the function of the categories could not be regarded as giving the least encouragement to metaphysicians who wanted to proceed along these lines; for he explicitly argued that their objective validity extended only as far as possible experience, the senses providing them with their material and content. Without that material they could not perform their essential role of organizing the data of perception in such a way as to give the phenomenal world the coherent and intelligible structure it has and to make rational thinking about it possible. To say that they are prior to experience, in the sense that without them our experience would lack the pervasive features that universally characterize it, is in no way to claim that they can be used in a manner that will yield information about transcendent or supersensible entities: on the contrary, the latter is *ex hypothesi* an impossible supposition. To take just one example: we can legitimately refer to something as the cause of something else only on the assumption that what we are discussing is such that we could in principle experience it; if not, there could be no question on the Kantian view of our making causal inferences or offering causal explanations at all. And the same is true in all other instances of the application of Kant's categories. It follows therefore that these could never serve as a means of acquiring knowledge of that which lies beyond the empirical sphere, or be appealed to in the construction of systems whose aim is to enlighten us concerning a super-sensible realm existing 'outside the world'. And Schopenhauer concludes that the

net result of Kant's discussion of the extent of human knowledge is to show that metaphysics, as traditionally conceived, is impossible. 'The criticism of pure reason takes its place.'

Here then are the cardinal features of the Kantian analysis, as outlined by Schopenhauer in the appendix to his main work and also in a subsequent essay called 'Some Further Comments on the Kantian Philosophy',[1] which, in a *general* way, seemed to him to be correct, whatever criticisms he might wish to bring against many of Kant's individual formulations and arguments. To accept them would be to accept an apparently drastically curtailed conception of the philosopher's function. For it now looks as if the ambitious aims previously associated with philosophical inquiry must finally be set aside, to be replaced by the more limited objective of seeking to comprehend and determine the nature of our experience and our thought about it: this was the kernel, indeed, of the Kantian distinction between 'transcendent' and 'transcendental' philosophy, for 'transcendental' philosophy in Kant's sense is philosophy that recognizes the fundamental structure of our knowledge to be determined by categories and principles which have their source in ourselves, and takes its primary business to be one of eliciting these. In so far as the old 'transcendent' metaphysics has a place in such a programme, it can only be in a way far from satisfying to those who have wished to endorse its grand pretensions. Although such metaphysics is necessarily incapable of establishing ontological truths, it could (Kant thought) be *explained* as springing from a kind of 'natural illusion' that was 'inseparable from human reason'. Further, in for ever seeking to overstep the limits of the only kind of knowledge which it is open to us to obtain, the metaphysical impulse is not without a certain value. It can be said, for instance, to act as a sort of perpetual spur to our ordinary empirical inquiries, continually leading us on to make fresh efforts in order to extend our knowledge of phenomena and reach more comprehensive and complete scientific explanations. Nor was its importance confined to the theoretical

1. *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Vol. I, pp. 84ff.

sphere. Kant thought that beliefs in transcendent entities – such, for example, as God – may, despite the fact that they have no cognitive validity, serve a vital practical purpose as postulates which play an indispensable role in our moral experience and which help to regulate our conduct. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the interpretations which (Schopenhauer maintained) had been quite wrongly put upon these aspects of Kant's doctrines by his successors in Germany, what Kant actually said went not one whit towards proving the existence of the postulated entities; nor was Kant himself – at any rate at the time when he wrote the *Critique of Pure Reason* – under the illusion that it did.

The Problem of the 'Thing-in-itself'

A stage has now been reached where it is possible to outline the position from which Schopenhauer's own philosophical system developed. In view of his declared acceptance of the main implications of Kant's anti-speculative theses, one might have expected his procedure to have been one of faithfully carrying forward the Kantian programme; one might have supposed that he would have set aside as hopeless any undertaking remotely savouring of ancient metaphysical ambitions, and that he would instead have restricted himself to the further investigation and analysis of the pervasive forms and categories in terms of which, according to Kant, we interpret our experience. The fact that Schopenhauer, as it turned out, did not confine himself within such limits may be explained by a variety of considerations, not all of which can be discussed at this point. There was, however, one special feature of Kant's philosophy to which Schopenhauer himself assigned a central place in explaining the evolution of his own ideas. This was the Kantian doctrine of the *Ding an sich*, or 'thing-in-itself'.

Schopenhauer suggests that the Kantian analysis of thought and knowledge can in fact be regarded as having two distinguishable aspects. From one point of view, Kant may be said to have sought the conditions which govern all thought and knowledge by considering simply the function and role of

certain very abstract concepts and logical 'forms of thought', concepts and forms in the absence of which we cannot comprehend what it would be like to think at all; in this sense 'what ... Kant ... looked for under the names of the categories were the most general concepts under which all things, however different, must be subsumed, and through which, therefore, everything that exists would ultimately be thought' (II, p. 85). Such highly general notions, being necessary to thinking, must at the same time be essential to the idea of intelligible speech; they can thus also (Schopenhauer indicates) be regarded as definitive of the conception of linguistic expression, in that it is impossible to suppose a language that does not in some form embody them: we cannot, for instance, 'imagine any language which would not consist at least of substantives, adjectives, and verbs', these denoting 'the forms which all thought primarily assumes and in which it directly moves' (ibid., p. 86). At the same time, however, we have seen that Kant may be held to have restricted the sphere of what may objectively be thought, and hence known, from another direction, by insisting upon the requirement that the application of certain fundamental notions in terms of which we describe and interpret the world, like *substance* and *cause*, must be confined to experience. But now there is a difficulty. For Kant, despite his emphasis upon the last-named limitation, was none the less apparently prepared to affirm the existence of 'things-in-themselves' (or *noumena*) lying behind or beyond the phenomena of sense-experience, and furthermore to treat these unobservables as the 'ground' of that of which we are empirically aware. Schopenhauer was quick to point out the problem presented by such a doctrine. For is accepting it not tantamount to doing what Kant's own interpretation of the role of categories like *cause* and *substance* expressly forbids, namely extending them to talk about what *ex hypothesi* lies beyond experience and is unconditioned by our own position and nature as observers? On Kant's principles, references to objects and to causal connexions is only legitimate in the context of empirical or phenomenal reality, as serving to 'spell out the phenomena of the world of sense';

how then can he consistently make such references in order 'to connect the phenomenal sphere itself with what lies outside it, and is *toto genere* different from it' (ibid., p. 123)? It is no answer to say that although things-in-themselves cannot be known by us, they can at least be *thought* by us. For in the first place, while granting that we cannot know what things-in-themselves are *like*, Kant at any rate speaks as if we could know that they *exist*. And, secondly, is it evident that any clear meaning can be attached to notions which, while sharing the form of concepts applicable to the empirical world, are yet acknowledged to be unrelated and unrelatable to any conceivable human experience? Schopenhauer suggests, in fact, that Kant was led into talking in this unacceptable manner as a result of confusions that lay deeply embedded in his thinking, confusions of which he may have been vaguely and uneasily conscious, but which he never explicitly recognized. For example, despite all that he said about 'the strange complicated machine with so many wheels' which he represented as constituting the faculty of human knowledge, he never properly distinguished between perception and abstract or discursive thought; between the question of what it is to see, hear, and so forth and the quite separate question of what it is to think in the sense of knowing how to use and combine concepts. Instead he ran the two together; on the one hand treating perceptual processes as if they were or at least involved a certain kind of conceiving, on the other failing to grasp the true nature of conceptual thinking and consequently obscuring the relations in which thought and speech stand to what we become aware of through our senses; one is, as a result, never entirely clear whether he intends his 'categories' to be taken as the condition of perceptual awareness or as 'the function of merely abstract thought' (ibid., p. 84). Partly because of this oscillation, and because, too, he failed to undertake a thorough analysis of conception as distinct from perception, Kant allowed himself to be drawn across limits which he himself had stipulated to be impassable, making claims that, on a strict interpretation of his own principles, were without justification.

This is not the place to discuss the justice of Schopenhauer's strictures on Kant's procedure, or to assess his explanation of Kant's alleged failure to appreciate the difficulties surrounding his doctrine of *noumena*. In so far as Kant often writes as if he were engaged upon some kind of quasi-psychological inquiry into the mechanics of cognition, one may at least feel sympathy with certain of Schopenhauer's observations, and in particular with what he says concerning the 'great apparatus' Kant postulated with a view to elucidating the inner workings of the mind – the cumbersome machinery of 'the twelve categories, the transcendental synthesis of imagination . . . the schematism of the pure concepts of the understanding, etc., etc.', which to Schopenhauer appeared to obscure rather than illuminate the problems Kant was engaged upon. But such considerations apart, the points Schopenhauer raises in this connexion bring into focus essential elements in his own philosophical position. What were these?

In spite of his objections to Kant's mode of presenting and discussing the thing-in-itself, Schopenhauer did not wish to claim that Kant's introduction of the notion was wholly unwarrantable or that it involved a complete misconception. On the contrary, he argued that it contained an important insight. Where Kant chiefly went astray was in the manner in which he based his doctrine upon a wrong application of his original categories, in particular those of substance and causality. But having pointed out the errors which marred Kant's reasoning, he himself was not prepared to take an alternative course that might have recommended itself to him. This would have consisted in denying all sense to attempts to describe or explain the physical world in non-perceptual terms, and in treating as mere confusion the belief that there is more to be discovered or said about 'the external world' than can be expressed in terms of actual or possible sense-experience. He might, for instance, have adopted towards the Kantian thing-in-itself the kind of approach taken up by some modern 'phenomenalists' to such ideas: to talk about physical reality just *is* to talk in a certain way about our sense-data; and hence to raise questions about the 'real' character and nature of the world, when these

are not conceived to be questions about the kind of sense-data that would be obtainable given the satisfaction of specifiable conditions, must be to indulge in meaningless speculations. What we see, touch, and so forth is not a mask or screen behind which mysteriously lurk noumenal entities, themselves invisible and intangible; to suppose that it is involves a needless and unverifiable duplication of worlds. Schopenhauer was by no means unaware of the force of this kind of objection, as is shown in many places where he discusses the confusions underlying various philosophical theories of the external world. He argues, for example, that all epistemological theories which seek to demonstrate that what we are immediately aware of in perception must be distinguished from real things – the latter being inaccessible to all observation and experience and functioning merely as the hidden causes of our 'ideas of perception', so that the perceiving subject can know only the effect or 'action' of the object upon him, never the object itself – are erroneous. Some of the points he makes against views of this sort are strongly reminiscent of the objections raised by Berkeley when considering Locke's theory of perception; in particular, his claim that if we try to imagine a world of 'real bodies' existing independently of our own or of anybody else's perception of it, we shall necessarily fail to do so; for all that we can possibly succeed in imagining is what an observer would see if he were looking at it, which is 'exactly what we desired to exclude' (II, p. 167). And, again like Berkeley, he is at considerable pains to insist that, far from conforming to the beliefs of 'common sense' (as their adherents sometimes claim that they conform), theories which maintain that we never actually see and touch objects themselves, but only the effects of these upon our minds, are impossibly paradoxical – 'the demand for an existence of the object outside the idea of the [perceiving] subject, and also for an essence of the actual thing different from its action, has absolutely no meaning, and is a contradiction' (I, p. 17). The exact significance of remarks like these can only be understood in the context of Schopenhauer's own theory of knowledge and perception, and must be discussed in the light of this.

Nevertheless, for immediate purposes they are enough to show that, whatever importance he wanted to assign to the notion of the 'thing-in-itself', he was far from wishing to reinstate any of the familiar philosophical doctrines concerning the existence of objects lying in some way beneath or beyond our perception of them. Such doctrines appeared to him to be radically misconceived, and to return to them would be to take a retrograde step.

What Schopenhauer suggested instead can briefly be outlined in the following way. Kant was essentially right, both in contending that we cannot gain knowledge of what lies beyond possible experience, and in the connected claim that it is not open to us to extend the application of principles like that of causality in a manner directed towards the acquisition of such knowledge. Thus the possibility of a certain type of speculative inquiry is excluded at the outset; we are prohibited from seeking to obtain information about the underlying (or 'real') explanation of things such as the traditional 'dogmatic' or 'transcendent' metaphysicians tried to provide. Is this, though, to say that metaphysics in *any* sense is impossible? May one not be in danger of simply ruling out metaphysical theorizing by an arbitrary fiat, a certain definition having been covertly introduced whereby the term 'metaphysics' is restricted in its application solely to the type of investigation that has been demonstrated to be incapable of achieving valid results? It is in the light of such questions that, according to Schopenhauer, Kant's contrast between phenomenal reality and things-in-themselves can be seen to have importance, even if it expresses the distinction in a misleading and unacceptable form. Considered as involving the notion that things-in-themselves form a class of non-empirical entities which in some fashion cause our perceptions, it must no doubt be rejected. There exists, nevertheless, another possible interpretation of the contrast, which avoids these objections and which at the same time indicates that metaphysics may after all have a genuine function to perform.

The interpretation of the contrast Schopenhauer wished to put forward is in fact expressed in the title he gave to his main

work, *The World as Will and Idea.* The underlying thought here can best be exhibited if we turn to a consideration of ourselves as human beings situated and acting in an environment of perceptible objects. The world which confronts us, as Kant correctly saw, is a phenomenal world, dependent upon our sense-experience and the ways in which we order and relate the data with which our sense-organs provide us. 'All that in any way belongs or can belong to the world is inevitably . . . conditioned through the subject, and exists only for the subject', Schopenhauer affirms at the beginning of his book, and he quotes approvingly the following passage from the English interpreter of Asian thought, Sir William Jones:

> The fundamental tenet of the Vedanta school consisted not in denying the existence of matter, that is, of solidity, impenetrability, and extended figure (to deny which would be lunacy), but in correcting the popular notion of it, and in contending that it has no essence independent of mental perception; that existence and perceptibility are convertible terms.

Though itself in need of further explanation and development, such a view was none the less, Schopenhauer thought, founded upon an incontrovertible truth. The kernel of that truth could be formulated succinctly in the proposition 'The world is my idea' ('*Die Welt ist meine Vorstellung*'), implying that all knowledge of objects is necessarily confined to the sphere of 'ideas',[1] or representations of a perceiving subject, this knowledge including from one standpoint the knowledge we have of ourselves. For, viewed as bodies occupying space and enduring through time, we are just as much phenomenal

1. The German word *Vorstellung* has a wide sense, covering representations, concepts, notions, and mental images; and Schopenhauer's own use of it, as comprising what is present to and lies within the consciousness of the knowing or perceiving subject, is extremely comprehensive. If this is clearly borne in mind, the commonly adopted translation of the word by 'idea' need not cause confusion, despite its drawbacks. Some commentators and translators (e.g. E. F. J. Payne) have however preferred 'representation'.

objects as stones and trees are, and take our place along with these as part of the furniture of the perceptible world. Hence we too, in Schopenhauer's terminology, can be said to be 'idea'.

At this juncture, however, a fact regarded by Schopenhauer to be of crucial importance has to be recognized. It is true that as an individual 'rooted in the world' I am aware of my body belonging to that world and therefore subject to conditions also governing the things which I see around me and which stand in perceptible relations to myself. And one may try to entertain the fantastic possibility that this might be the *only* knowledge available to me of myself; under such circumstances I should be confined to treating my body purely as 'an object amongst objects', whose movements I should be aware of solely by observing what it did, and whose activities I could understand solely by reference to certain regularities which I had learned, as a result of past experience, to govern its behaviour. But the very difficulty of envisaging distinctly what it would be like to view one's own body in such a fashion serves to underline in a most emphatic way the very point Schopenhauer wishes to make; namely, that I am aware of myself in two completely different ways, and that while from one point of view I can truly be said to observe my body and its behaviour as I observe other physical things and their behaviour, I am also conscious of myself in a quite separate manner 'from within'. When I know myself in this second way, I grasp myself as *will*: it is precisely the awareness we have of our own bodies as expressions of will, and of our own movements as acts of will, that distinguishes self-consciousness from the purely perceptual knowledge we have of other things. At the same time, it must not be supposed that my will and my body are two separate entities whose activities I merely find by experience to be invariably associated with each other; a dualistic account along these lines would be quite mistaken. Thus Schopenhauer writes (I, p. 130):

The act of will and the movement of the body are not two different things objectively known, which the bond of causality unites; they do not stand in the relation of cause

and effect; they are one and the same, but they are given in two entirely different ways: in one case immediately, in the other in perception for the understanding. The action of the body is nothing but the act of will objectified, i.e. passed into perception.

Indeed, 'the whole body is nothing but objectified will, i.e. will become idea', and: 'It is only in reflection that to will and to act are different; in reality they are one.' From all this it follows that I cannot intelligibly speak as if my knowledge of my body were knowledge of something independent of my will. What *is* true – and it is this that for me distinguishes my body from all other objects of which I may be perceptually aware – is that I have a double or twofold knowledge (*eine doppelte Erkenntnis*) of myself: I am aware of myself at the same time as being both 'idea' and 'will', for 'my body and my will are one' (ibid., p. 133).

In putting forward these considerations, Schopenhauer believed that he was again following up a clue provided by Kant. For the view that human beings can be looked at from two different standpoints is one that Kant had propounded when discussing, within the context of a consideration of our moral experience, the question of free-will. According to Kant, we can regard ourselves as on one side belonging to the 'world of sense' and as such subject to universal laws of nature, and on the other side as belonging to the 'intelligible world' where the only laws to which we are subject are those founded on and prescribed by 'reason'. In viewing ourselves as members of the intelligible world, we can consider ourselves to be 'things-in-themselves', or *noumena*, and the distinction introduced allows us to maintain that although (regarded as phenomena) we are causally determined in all that we do, yet regarded as *noumena* exercising and being guided by reason, we are free. Schopenhauer considered Kant's ideas on this subject to be of very great importance, constituting 'the point at which the Kantian philosophy leads to mine, or at which mine springs out of his as its parent stem' (II, p. 117). Nevertheless, Schopenhauer's own conception of the way in which human beings can be regarded from two distinct standpoints diverged

in a fundamental manner from that of Kant, as he himself stressed. In the first place, Kant claimed that, since the nature of things-in-themselves is unknowable, we can never *know* ourselves to be free rational agents belonging to the 'intelligible world' – this suggestion can never be more than an unprovable postulate, 'an idea of reason, whose objective reality in itself is doubtful'. Schopenhauer, on the other hand, wishes to claim, not merely that it is possible to *conceive* of ourselves in two different ways, but that we do in fact *know* ourselves in two different ways. Secondly, what from a non-perceptual point of view we recognize ourselves to be 'in ourselves' is not at all as Kant described it: as we shall discover later on, he thought that Kant's characterization of the noumenal self was quite erroneous.

In a general way Schopenhauer thought that his own theory provided the key to the overall problem of the relation between phenomena and things-in-themselves which haunts Kant's philosophy like an uneasy ghost. For this relation can now be given an interpretation that avoids the difficulties inherent in Kant's formulations. For Schopenhauer, 'our *willing* is the one opportunity which we have of understanding simultaneously from within any event which exhibits itself outwardly, consequently the one thing which is known to us *immediately*, and not, like all the rest, merely given in idea' (II, pp. 405–6): thus the restriction of our knowledge to perceptible phenomena, which otherwise holds universally, does not apply in the case of myself; and Schopenhauer further argues that in recognizing my perceptible body as being at the same time will, I am conscious of what it is 'in itself' – the will 'reveals itself to everyone directly as the in-itself of his own phenomenal being' (ibid., p. 119). But we should not be justified, simply on the grounds that we are immediately aware of this double aspect of things in the case of our own bodies alone, in supposing that it is only here that the distinction between phenomenal existence and thing-in-itself can validly be applied. If a person were to assume this, he would be implying that his own body was unique amongst all the objects with which he was or could be perceptually acquainted; it alone would be 'will' as

well as 'idea', and hence he would be committed to the position that it was 'the only real individual in the world' (I, pp. 134–5). Such a view is one that Schopenhauer labels 'theoretical egoism', regarding it as the counterpart of what in another context may be described as 'practical egoism', this being the kind of attitude which a man manifests when in his dealings with his fellows he treats himself alone as a person entitled to serious consideration. Schopenhauer is prepared to allow that 'theoretical egoism' cannot be disproved by logical argument; he claims, however, that it has never in fact been regarded in philosophy as more than a sophistical pretence – as a serious conviction it could only be found in a madhouse, standing in need of a cure rather than a refutation, and it may therefore be safely disregarded. What he says on this subject is perhaps worth noticing in the light of the 'solipsistic' beliefs that are sometimes attributed to him. It is, I think, true that he never, for example, properly faced the philosophical problem of our knowledge of other people conceived of as animated beings with an inner life like our own, or took account of the difficulties which some of his own theoretical presuppositions might be held to raise in this regard. But however that may be, he certainly did not wish to be understood as saying that a man could legitimately suppose those about him to be mere products or projections of his own individual consciousness; such notions are indeed incompatible with the main tenets of his system as he subsequently develops it.

Schopenhauer maintains that we are in fact bound to think of the world we inhabit, which includes other human beings to all intents and purposes like ourselves, as being more than mere phenomenon or 'idea'; and it is this obscure consciousness which finds expression in various well-known philosophical 'solutions' of the problem of the external world. Nevertheless, the problem has been misconceived, the inarticulate dissatisfaction that gives rise to it misapprehended and misinterpreted. Philosophers have obsessively looked for something in essentials *like* what we normally take to be reality (i.e. phenomenal objects and events) but at the same time different in that what is so sought must be thought of as lacking

any *sensible* properties; yet such a quest necessarily involves absurdities and contradictions. So far as the existence of physical objects is concerned, the world we perceive is not to be regarded as 'illusion', but rather lies 'open for sense and understanding' and 'presents itself with naïve truth as that which it is' (I, p. 19). What in the depths of our being we feel, however, is that all appearances to the contrary, the rest of the world in some way shares the same fundamental nature which through direct inner experience we know to be ours. And in this sense the old philosophical conundrum can be given a meaningful interpretation: moreover, it can be answered. For each of us is aware in his own case that he is not merely phenomenon but also 'will'.

By thus appealing to personal experience as providing the key to the inner nature of the world as a whole, Schopenhauer thought that he had circumvented the kind of objection it is reasonable to bring against the Kantian doctrine of the 'thing-in-itself'. For in the first place it seemed to him obvious that my knowledge of myself as will is different in kind from my knowledge of myself as idea or representation. What I am aware of in self-consciousness is not, it is true, something separate from what I am aware of when I look at my body and observe its movements, if by this it is implied that I have to do with two different entities or with two different sets of occurrences. The point is, however, that when I am conscious of myself as will I am not conscious of myself *as an object*; I am only conscious of myself under the latter aspect when I perceive myself at the same time as a body, for my body is the 'objectification' of my will. Thus to regard the 'thing-in-itself' as will is not to be committed to a belief in duplicate skeletal objects underlying the objects of sense-perception, with all the attendant difficulties such a position involves. For 'will' is not the name of any sort of object: questions concerning the shape or size of the will, for instance, are evidently out of place, and it is even misleading to ascribe 'unity' to it – 'it is itself one, though not in the sense that an object is one, for the unity of an object can only be known by contrast to a possible multiplicity' (I, p. 146). Nor is it right to speak of will

as a *cause*, e.g. of its causing bodily behaviour: Schopenhauer's doctrine that an act of will and a corresponding movement of the body are not two distinct events, but the same event considered under different aspects, rules out the application of causal terminology here. Thus on Schopenhauer's account of the 'thing-in-itself' there is no problem to be faced concerning the justification of extending the causal principle beyond the sphere of perceptible phenomena, for the will is not such that it does or could function as the cause of such phenomena – its relation to them is of quite another kind. Finally, on Schopenhauer's theory, the 'thing-in-itself' is not wholly beyond our reach, inexperienceable and therefore unknowable, since we at least have access to it in our own self-awareness:

> . . . a *way from within* stands open for us to that essential inner nature of things, to which we cannot penetrate *from without*; as it were, a subterranean passage . . . which, as if by treachery, places us at once within the fortress which it was impossible to take by assault from without. (II, p. 405)

Now to suggest that we may validly extrapolate from the content of our own inner self-knowledge to that of our fellow human beings, whose appearance, behaviour, modes of expression, and so forth largely resemble our own, is one thing; but surely to ascribe what we find through self-conscious reflection upon our own inner experience to everything else in the phenomenal world, conscious and non-conscious, animate and inanimate alike, is a very different matter? And that, of course, is so. Schopenhauer's theory involves an explicit extension of concepts and modes of description beyond the areas within which they are normally restricted in their use, so that they come to cover *all* objects of experience. It is precisely this feature of his system which gives it the peculiar kind of comprehensiveness naturally associated with metaphysical theories, of whatever kind; a comprehensiveness which cuts across accepted classifications and divisions in a fashion so total and all-embracing that it seems to rule out the possibility of the theory's being challenged by reference to particular

considerations or observations of the sort relevant at the level of common sense or empirical science.

Schopenhauer would not have wished to deny that his theory was metaphysical in this sense. The fact that the world presents itself to us 'as a riddle' returning again and again to torment us, and that the puzzlement and disquiet with which its existence and nature fills us do not appear to be such that they could be removed by any information the empirical sciences may be able to offer – these are matters, he implies, to be taken seriously; they cannot be simply brushed aside on the grounds that philosophers have notoriously failed in their attempts to satisfy us with regard to them. Kant was admittedly able to show why his predecessors had always failed, by exposing the emptiness of all claims to knowledge transcending the limits of possible experience. But why, once again, should it be assumed that all metaphysics must be 'transcendent' in character? May it not be that philosophers have been misled into making their preposterous claims by insufficiently recognizing the resources provided by experience, and in particular inner experience, as a means of interpreting the world? With this in mind, Schopenhauer wrote:

> I . . . say that the solution of the riddle of the world must proceed from the understanding of the world itself; that . . . the task of metaphysics is not to pass over the experience in which the world exists, but to understand it thoroughly, because outer and inner experience is . . . the principal source of all knowledge; that therefore the solution of the riddle of the world is only possible through the proper connexion of outer with inner experience, effected at the right point . . . (II, p. 20)

Along what general lines, on this interpretation, will metaphysics proceed? Since its function is not conceived to be one of transcending experience, it is not wedded to the idea that it must proceed by purely deductive reasoning, basing itself solely upon *a priori* concepts and formal principles. The latter conception of philosophical method, springing as it does from the belief that 'only what we know *before* all experience can extend beyond all possible experience' (II, p. 386), breaks

down when it is seen that the only concepts and principles which can properly be said to be *a priori* in the requisite sense are (as Kant showed) ones whose legitimate employment is tied to empirical contexts. And in point of fact philosophers who have in their theorizing striven to conform to the conception in question have tended, despite their professions, covertly to introduce into their premisses certain experiential ideas and judgements; without, however, realizing that this makes it impossible for them to move through deduction to their desired goal, since 'nothing can follow from a proposition except what it already really says itself' (ibid., p. 393). Whatever their pretensions, the systems offered only too often represent no more than tautologous transformations of propositions (definitional or factual) assumed at the outset to be true.[1] Once, on the other hand, it is honestly realized that philosophy cannot be a purely formal or deductive discipline, envisaged on the model of certain idealized sciences, and also that its fundamental datum can be nothing else but experience, the metaphysician need no longer be deceived concerning the scope of his activity; he will, moreover, be in a position to approach the problem presented by existence in a more discerning and perspicacious manner, unbefuddled by abstract conceptions, and less ready to treat as profound truths about the nature of things what are often in fact no more than superficial trivialities suggested by certain partial aspects of ordinary life and knowledge.

For philosophy should properly be concerned with the interpretation of what Schopenhauer calls 'experience in

1. Schopenhauer refers elsewhere to Spinoza as an example of this tendency. The latter, 'who always boasts that he proceeds *more geometrico*, has actually done so more than he himself was aware. For what he knew with certainty . . . from an immediate perceptive apprehension of the nature of the world, he seeks to demonstrate logically without reference to this knowledge. He only arrives at the intended and predetermined result by starting from concepts arbitrarily framed by himself (*substantia*, *causa sui*, etc.), and in the demonstrations he allows himself all the freedom of choice for which the nature of the wide concept-spheres affords convenient opportunity . . .' (I, p. 100).

general'; and that alone, quite apart from other considerations, is sufficient to distinguish it from empirical inquiries of the ordinary sort, to which – if its claims to be an *a priori* study are denied – there might be an inclination to assimilate it. The observational sciences treat of findings which lie within definable and specific limits; further, the fact that new discoveries are constantly being made within their various separate domains involves the continual revision and reappraisal of old theories, the provision of new ones. By contrast, philosophy is not dependent in this manner upon results obtained in particular areas of investigation; it is not 'confirmable' or 'falsifiable' in the sense in which an empirical hypothesis may be said to be so. One should not, however, infer from this that a philosophical interpretation of the world must necessarily be 'vacuous', that there is no way in which it can intelligibly be said to conform or fail to conform to experience. Schopenhauer compares such an interpretation to the deciphering of a 'cryptograph', arguing that just as an explanation of something written in cipher is in a certain sense justified by 'the agreement and connexion in which all the letters of that writing are placed by this explanation', so 'a deciphering of the world' is shown to be acceptable 'through the agreement with each other in which it places the very diverse phenomena of the world, and which we do not perceive without it' (II, pp. 390–1). Such a deciphering must 'prove itself from itself', this proof being 'the mark of genuineness'; what is interpreted in terms of it must so to speak 'come out right' (ibid., p. 392). It was an interpretation of this kind that Schopenhauer believed that he had provided in his own theory, a theory which, taking as its 'subject and source' not particular experiences but the 'totality of all experience', and employing as its primary concepts notions which already have a specific meaning within that totality, offered a solution to the 'riddle of the world' such that once it was grasped it could be directly recognized as being correct; in the light of it, phenomenal existence in general could be seen to possess a determinate and pervasive inward significance, present in all its multifarious manifestations. And while always insisting that his

theory was in no sense comparable to a scientific hypothesis, in some of his later work (e.g. *WN*, Chs. 1–3) Schopenhauer implied that what he had written might even be said to have obtained a kind of indirect 'corroboration' from the fact that certain recent empirical investigators, particularly when interpreting the functions and development of living organisms, had adopted modes of viewing and representing natural phenomena strikingly close to those suggested by his own system. He stressed, however, that metaphysics conceived on the pattern outlined must on no account be presumed capable of answering every question we may find ourselves wanting to ask about the ultimate character and explanation of reality. Its scope was restricted to the world and our experience of the world; if anyone demanded elucidations which went beyond this, he was asking for something which could be neither thought nor understood – 'something that the human intellect is absolutely incapable of grasping and thinking' (II, p. 392). It followed that any philosopher who took it upon himself to afford such a solution, and who spoke of knowing the final ground or origin of things by reference to that which lies 'outside the world' and beyond all possible experience, alluding to it as 'the Absolute', or by some other equally mystifying expression, could not be accorded serious consideration. He would be merely playing tricks.

In this chapter I have tried to explain the special sense in which Schopenhauer thought metaphysics possible, and to examine the reasons that led him to reject more ambitious claims regarding its function. I have also given a sketch of the framework he himself adopted in order to portray and interpret our experience: a framework whose principal feature lies in the contrast drawn between the conception of the world as idea or representation and the conception of the world as will. It is this contrast, intelligible to us in the light of our inner knowledge of ourselves, which is held to provide the key to the understanding of our experience viewed as a whole: once comprehended, the truth it points to shows itself everywhere we look. In the two chapters that follow, it will be necessary

to examine in detail the manner in which Schopenhauer developed and elaborated his theory of the world, first under its aspect as idea and secondly under its aspect as will, and to consider from a critical point of view some of the problems and difficulties it raises.

CHAPTER THREE

Knowledge and Thought

SCHOPENHAUER'S doctoral thesis, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, appeared in its original form when its author was only twenty-five, five years before the publication of *The World as Will and Idea*. Despite certain inevitable immaturities, he considered it to be of great importance for the understanding of the subsequent development of his philosophical position, holding that it represented the foundation of his entire system. For this reason he produced in 1847 a new edition of the book, considerably altered and expanded, and designed to set right various 'incorrect and superfluous' passages contained in the first version. So revised, he regarded it as providing a compendious theory of knowledge and perception in its own right, apart from its connexion with what he wrote elsewhere and from the light it throws upon his main work. For the purposes of this exposition, however, it is convenient to treat the *Fourfold Root* and the first book of *The World as Will and Idea* together; despite differences in emphasis and in the fullness of treatment accorded to specific topics, the problems each deals with are to a large extent the same.

The nature of these problems has been briefly referred to in the previous chapter. Following Kant, Schopenhauer was anxious to insist that our experience and knowledge of the 'phenomenal' world, the world as it appears at the level of common-sense perception and scientific inquiry, necessarily conforms to certain fundamental patterns and principles, these patterns and principles having their source in ourselves. To articulate them clearly and explicitly must, then, be a task of the highest importance, for only by so doing can we come to a proper understanding of the framework and limits within which our ordinary empirical knowledge and thinking are set. Moreover it is essentially a task for philosophers; for who else

could undertake it? Certainly not the natural scientist. The scientist's problems are particular problems arising *within* experience and decidable *by* experience; hence in their very formulation the conditions that are here the object of investigation are already presupposed. As Schopenhauer expresses it: '. . . just what the sciences presuppose and lay down as the basis and limits of their explanation is precisely and peculiarly the problem of philosophy, which may therefore be said to begin where the sciences break off' (I, p. 107). Thus we can reasonably treat what he has to say about the world considered as 'idea' as being to a considerable extent an attempt to characterize these presuppositions, and – more generally – to make explicit what is involved in the conception of ourselves as percipients and investigators confronting and seeking to explain an objective world of things and events. And this, in itself, seems to be an important and perfectly proper philosophical undertaking. But we must, of course, also bear in mind the limited role accorded by Schopenhauer to this type of inquiry within the context of his system as a whole, recognizing that it does not, in his view, by any means exhaust the field of legitimate philosophical investigation; rather, he considers it to be a necessary preliminary to trying to answer further questions about the nature of our knowledge and experience. The fact, for example, that we naturally interpret and conceptualize our experience as we do raises deeper problems concerning our own true innermost character and make-up, our status as beings who, while belonging to the phenomenal world, at the same time act upon it, and in ways that may produce profound effects and repercussions on those around us. It appears, too, that we are sometimes capable of contemplating and comprehending certain aspects of the world in a manner that cannot plausibly be assimilated to ordinary modes of perception and understanding. Through the consideration of such matters as these we shall be led into the fields of ethics and aesthetics, and be forced to examine issues which, since they concern the metaphysical significance of our lives and of the ways in which we are prone to conduct them, are of a kind no philosophical system can afford to ignore. Schopenhauer's *Fourfold Root*, and

the first book of his main work, consequently represent the initial stage of an exceedingly far-reaching and comprehensive programme; this is something to be remembered, however much the scope and range of his project may startle a modern reader accustomed to more modest forms of philosophical investigation.

The Principle of Sufficient Reason

In all our usual dealings with the world, we bring with us, Schopenhauer maintains, the idea of a principle which 'authorizes us everywhere to search for the *why*', whatever may be the particular topic or area of inquiry that concerns us. Whether we ask why certain natural phenomena occur (e.g. thunderstorms), or why people do certain things (e.g. build houses or make guns), or again why certain propositions should be accepted as true (e.g. propositions of natural science or history), we are in every case presupposing the validity of a rule that justifies us in asking such questions. It is a principle to which, in its most general form, Schopenhauer applies the label of 'the principle of sufficient reason', and its content may be summarily (if crudely) expressed by saying that 'nothing is without a reason for its being'. The operation of this principle is, as we shall see, held by Schopenhauer to be of central importance for the analysis he is about to undertake: he thinks it necessary, therefore, to begin by making a few general observations about it.

In the first place, it must be recognized that the principle he has in mind has had a long, if rather chequered, philosophical career. Although Leibniz was largely responsible for its formal elevation to the status of a cardinal principle of all knowledge and science, approximations to what is in essence the same conception are to be found in the works of Plato and Aristotle, as well as in those of more recent philosophers, such as Descartes. To point out that various rough formulations of the principle have often been put forward is, however, one thing; it is another thing to claim that all those who have referred to this ancient piece of philosophical machinery have possessed a clear understanding of its true significance or that they have accur-

rately described its proper use and application. According to Schopenhauer, previous writers had not only failed to appreciate the actual role performed by the principle in theoretical and practical inquiry; worse, they had, as a result of oversights and confusions, regularly misused and misapplied it in ways that invalidated some of their most cherished arguments and conclusions. In a large number of cases such mistakes can be traced to a common failure to distinguish adequately between the notion of a *reason* and the notion of a *cause*; and Schopenhauer therefore undertakes a brief critical survey in which he tries to show, by reference to actual examples, how what he elsewhere calls 'the improper use of general concepts' may wreak havoc in philosophical thinking.

Thus Descartes is accused of confounding the concepts of *cause* and *reason* when in his attempts to prove the existence of God he claims that the immensity of God's nature is a *cause or reason* (*causa sive ratio*) beyond which no cause is needed for his existence. Schopenhauer argues that Descartes, while generally accepting the principle that everything that exists must have a cause, in the case of God slips in the notion of a reason instead; he is thereby enabled to contend that God's existence simply follows from and hence can be explained by his own nature without reference to anything further: this, indeed, is the essence of the famous 'ontological' proof. Descartes' procedure is nevertheless quite illegitimate. Giving a reason (in the somewhat eccentric sense that is here in question) is a matter of providing a proposition from which another proposition formally follows: to say, for example, that a table is a yard long may be a 'reason' for saying that it is more than two feet long, inasmuch as the truth of the second statement is a logically necessary consequence of the truth of the first. But to suppose that the employment of this kind of argument can by itself demonstrate the existence of anything – let alone that it can be used in lieu of giving a *causal* explanation, in the sense of identifying some logically independent factor or event antecedent to and productive of the circumstance to be explained – must always be the purest self-deception. In the end it comes down to no more than eliciting the implications of some par-

ticular concept or set of concepts; one could say that it was a form of definition. However, defining a concept and proving that there is something to which it applies are 'different matters, separate to all eternity, since by the one we learn *what* it is that is meant, by the other *that* such a thing exists' (*FR* §7): this is, indeed, a truism that was recognized as long ago as Aristotle, when he said existence could never belong to the essence of a thing[1] and thus anticipated by centuries Kant's celebrated disproof of the Ontological Argument for the existence of God on the grounds that existence is not a true predicate, or attribute of things – 'as if he [Aristotle] could detect this piece of scholastic jugglery through the shades of coming darkness, and wished to bar the road to it'. Schopenhauer observes, however, that neither Aristotle nor Kant had succeeded in preventing Hegel from utilizing the same trick in order to deceive his readers, the latter's whole philosophy being at root no more than 'a monstrous amplification of the Ontological Proof' (ibid.).

Similar confusions may be detected in Spinoza. In many ways Schopenhauer was sympathetic towards Spinoza's general ideas, especially regarding the latter's rejection of the Cartesian view of reality as comprehending two distinct kinds of substance, 'thinking' and 'extended'; and Spinoza's own doctrine – that body and mind must ultimately be conceived as 'attributes' of what is *au fond* one and the same substance – in fact bears points of resemblance to Schopenhauer's doctrine of the metaphysical identity of body and will. But as has already been seen, Schopenhauer was deeply opposed to the Spinozist method and conception of philosophical inquiry, and it is therefore no surprise to find him criticizing the *kinds of argument* which – not always entirely accurately – he accused Spinoza of employing to establish his conclusions concerning the nature of things. Many of these arguments (he claims) are noteworthy for the manner in which they involve an explicit identification of the notions of *cause* and *reason*. Thus, the relation Spinoza had in mind when he called God the eternal cause of everything that exists in the world was not a relation of the type

1. *Posterior Analytics*, 92 b 14.

more orthodox theists have envisaged when they have spoken in these terms. In so far as they have referred to God as a causal agent, they have regarded him as something distinct from the effects he brings about; for example, as a Prime Mover who, while creating and setting in motion the universe, remains separable both in thought and fact from that universe. But this view, which proved acceptable to scientists and theologians alike in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, cannot be attributed to Spinoza. For the latter, the relation of God to the world is in essence a logical one, which he none the less misleadingly presents in causal terminology – a circumstance which has led to various (understandable) misinterpretations of his philosophy. Everything that exists or occurs in the world is deducible from God's nature, as an attribute or mode of the one single all-embracing 'substance' (*Deus sive substantia*). Thus, Schopenhauer argues, for Spinoza all true judgements concerning God's relation to the particular facts of the world are interpretable as analytic. On his theory, to say something about the world is always a case of explicating what is already implicit in the concept of God: likewise, when Spinoza asks us to assent to the proposition that God is the cause of the world, he is really asking us to assent to what is – on his own definitions – a tautology, and not what it appears to be, an explanation; for 'to call the world "God" is not to explain it, it is only to enrich our language with a superfluous synonym for the word "world"' (*Parerga* II, p. 105). Further puzzlement is apt to be generated when Spinoza goes on to equate the notion of a cause capable of destroying a thing, or of bringing an end to its existence, with the quite different notion of a contradiction contained in the definition of a concept: 'his need of confounding cause with reason here becomes so urgent that he can never say *causa* or *ratio* alone, but always finds its necessary to put *ratio seu causa*' (*FR* §8). And such equivocation reaches its extreme point when Spinoza speaks of the ultimate substance, which is 'God or Nature', as being 'cause of itself' (*causa sui*), its existence not being susceptible to further explanation. This is really only another way of saying that the substance in question is such that its essence implies its exist-

ence, which is the 'ontological proof' over again. Moreover, in Spinoza's formulation it involves 'the most palpable confusion of *reason* and *cause*', the notion of 'causa sui' being introduced as if it were capable of effecting a break in the chain of causes and effects in nature. So understood, it is an absurdity for which the right emblem would be Baron Münchhausen sinking on horseback into the water, clinging by his legs to his horse, and pulling both himself and the animal out by his own pigtail (ibid.).

In putting forward these objections to illicit applications of the principle of sufficient reason, Schopenhauer did not of course wish to deny that valid forms of argument or explanation involving notions like *ground* and *consequent*, *cause* and *effect*, and so forth, exist; quite the contrary. He did, however, hold that it was essential to demarcate clearly and unambiguously the areas in which such ideas could legitimately be applied, and not, for example, run together the separate and distinct conceptions of causal and logical necessity in the manner illustrated by much *a priori* speculation. If this was not done, the way remained open for the confusion of wholly different categories of thought, leading inevitably to the abuse of logic and language at a very deep level. Instead of blindly assimilating different modes of reasoning to one another, or of trying to force them all into one single mould in conformity with some preselected standard of 'true' inference, Schopenhauer implies that we should take care to respect the irreducible variety of distinguishable species of thinking and inquiry. It is true that, in his opinion, these can all in the end be subsumed beneath the single principle of sufficient reason, regarded as comprehending the different sorts of reasoning appropriate to particular phenomenal contexts and fields of investigation. But that does not mean that we can intelligibly refer to such a thing as 'a reason in general'; as Schopenhauer puts it, 'every philosopher who, in the course of his speculations, founds a conclusion upon the principle of sufficient reason, or indeed talks of a reason at all, is bound to specify which kind of reason he means' (*FR* §52).

To recognize that the principle is subject to such limits is to

be made aware of a further point of great importance. Schopenhauer insists that it cannot be put to a 'transcendent' use, and that in whatever form it is employed or presupposed it can never extend beyond the confines of possible experience. For what we have to deal with here (and his position is essentially the same as that adopted by Kant with regard to the application of the 'categories') is restricted to the interpretation of the phenomenal world, the world as idea: it is only by reference to that world that the key concepts embodied in the principle of sufficient reason under its various forms can be characterized and their functions elucidated. We cannot therefore treat it as authorizing us to try to answer questions which take us beyond the limits of experiencable reality; we cannot, for instance, say of the world *as a whole* that it exists or must exist by reason of something apart from itself: to do so would be to set the *a priori* principles of the human intellect 'above gods and fate', in the fashion rightly stigmatized by Kant as illegitimate. Yet it is just such a use of the principle in its causal form that lies behind one version of the so-called 'cosmological proof' of the existence of God, whereby it is claimed that in so far as nothing can come into existence in the absence of a prior cause, there must have been a *causa prima* or 'First Cause' as a result of whose agency the entire natural world proceeded as its effect. This particular argument is indeed doubly unjustified. Quite apart from the fact that it involves employing the 'law of causality' beyond the phenomenal sphere, in order to infer the existence of a transcendent being, it is in any case internally inconsistent, since it relies upon a principle which, if the conclusion of the argument were true, could not be accepted; we cannot use the causal law as if it were a sort of cab, to be dismissed when we have reached our destination – it might more justly be compared to the broom brought to life by Goethe's sorcerer's apprentice, which once set in motion could not be induced to leave off running and fetching water (*FR* §20).[1]

So far as knowledge of phenomena is concerned, on the other hand, the validity of the principle of sufficient reason is beyond challenge. As we shall discover, Schopenhauer considers it to

1. See also *The World as Will and Idea*, II, pp. 215–16.

be presupposed by the very conception of the world as idea or *Vorstellung*. And in any case what sense could there be, at *this* level, in questioning it? Inasmuch as it is a condition of all ordinary thought and knowledge, representing 'the common expression of the different laws of our cognitive faculties', to demand that it should in its turn be certified or substantiated is to seek a demonstration of the very principle from which, in the context in question, the notions of certification and proof derive their meaning and significance. Should we not therefore find ourselves 'in the circle of requiring a proof of our right to exact a proof', our requests presupposing the validity of that which we wish to see established? A more reasonable approach would consist in investigating instead the nature of the principle, and in trying to exhibit as accurately as possible its functions in guiding and structuring our thinking and experience. Such is the course Schopenhauer himself undertakes to pursue.

Before going on to discuss the account he provides, however, it will be as well to consider briefly a particular difficulty which might be felt to arise out of what has just been said. It is clear from his remarks that Schopenhauer intends his fundamental principle to be understood in an extremely wide sense, in that he speaks of it as relating among other things to the validation or justification of propositions and theses. And from this point of view it might appear misleading of him to refer (as he does) to his principle as being, *tout court*, 'the principle of all explanation'. Giving a cause of a natural event is certainly explaining or going part of the way towards explaining that event. On the other hand, offering reasons or grounds for a statement is hardly describable as a case of explanation at all; rather it is a matter of providing substantiation or support. Hence it may be objected that since we are here concerned with notions which seemingly belong to quite separate departments of our thought, to try to bring them together by exhibiting them as falling within the scope of a single principle or by suggesting that they spring from a common source or 'root' can ultimately only lead to confusion of the kind Schopenhauer professed himself most anxious to avoid.

Yet although Schopenhauer's choice of terminology and mode of expression may sometimes have been unfortunate, it would, I think, be unfair to press this objection too hard. He undoubtedly believed that all our common sense and scientific thinking, of whatever kind, was characterized by a persistent demand for reasons, finding its natural expression in questions prefaced by the word 'why', and involving a constant effort to present our knowledge in different spheres of investigation in a systematic coherent form. But few philosophers have been more insistent in practice upon the need to discriminate between the distinguishable ways in which questions of the 'why' form may be used; and, as will emerge in more detail shortly, Schopenhauer in fact went to considerable trouble to differentiate clearly between, on the one hand, justifying or establishing statements and propositions, and, on the other, explaining or accounting for matters of fact. Indeed, even within the field of explanation proper, as exhibited in the spheres of the empirical sciences, he thought that important differences were liable to be overlooked. There is a constant temptation to suppose that explanatory procedures must all necessarily conform to a single unchanging pattern, whatever may be the particular subject-matter or objects of inquiry. Schopenhauer argues that this is by no means so: modes of understanding vary widely between different branches of investigation, as do the basic categories employed; the interpretative concepts central to different fields may show significant divergences of meaning. This is particularly apparent when one examines the role played by the notion of *stimulus and response* in biology, and the notion of *motivation* in psychological or historical studies. Schopenhauer regards both these concepts as being basically causal in character, but he suggests that they have uses and applications which mark them off not merely from each other, but also from their analogues in the physical and chemical sciences, claiming that it is by reference to such differences, which are familiar to anyone who has some acquaintance with the sciences and disciplines involved, that the distinction between their respective subject-matters can most profitably by explained and understood. However crudely expressed by present-day standards it

may seem to be, the general idea underlying these observations still has some methodological interest.

The Knowing Subject and the Phenomenal World

We must now try to reconstruct the stages of the argument by which Schopenhauer attempts to show how the specific forms taken by the principle of sufficient reason enter into our thought and knowledge, thereby contributing in an essential way to the conception of the world considered as idea. This is not an easy task; despite the suggestiveness of many of the points and remarks it contains, Schopenhauer's discussion is conspicuously lacking in rigour and is characterized by a looseness of exposition that can be very daunting. Nevertheless the outlines and main direction of his thinking are, I shall suggest, reasonably clear.

The problem of the relation of man's thought and knowledge to reality is an old one in philosophy. What justifies our claims to be aware of a world of external things? Under what conditions is such awareness achieved? How far does reality correspond to our ideas and beliefs about it? What is the relation between ourselves as knowing individuals and the reality which we claim to know? These and similar questions have been the starting-point of inquiries which belong to that branch of philosophy traditionally known as 'epistemology', and it is with such questions in mind that at an early stage of his main work Schopenhauer introduces the notions of *subject* and *object* as representing the basic concepts in terms of which his own conception of the world as idea must be characterized: the relation of subject and object is described as 'that form under which alone any idea, of whatever kind it may be . . . is generally possible or thinkable' (I, p. 3), and elsewhere as 'the framework of the phenomenon' (II, p. 179). In saying this, and insisting that the relation in question constituted the only foundation upon which an acceptable theory of knowledge could be constructed, he believed that he was drawing attention to a truth which had regularly been misapprehended in the history of philosophy. Philosophers in the past had certainly made free with the ideas of a 'knowing or thinking consciousness' and an 'external world or reality', such as Schopenhauer

in his references to 'subject' and 'object' might be supposed to have in mind. But he makes it clear that he does not wish his own employment of the concepts in question to be confused with theirs, on the grounds that they had consistently failed to recognize certain essential conditions and limitations which should govern their proper use. The knowing subject, for example, has frequently been spoken of as if it were an isolable entity, a self-sufficient thinking substance, capable of being picked out and described without reference to anything beyond itself (including the body of the human being in which it is mysteriously lodged). This mode of conceiving the nature of the knowing subject, which presupposes the presence of an unbridgeable gulf separating it from the physical reality in which it finds embodiment and by which it may in various ways be affected, is the recurrent source of a familiar type of philosophical predicament. For if the postulated immaterial subject and the material reality of which it claims to have cognizance are set over against one another in the fashion described, a formidable problem arises concerning exactly how the relation between knower and known is to be characterized and intelligibly explained. This problem, Schopenhauer thought, had been brought into clear prominence by the Cartesian philosophy, its emphasis upon the contrast between inner subjective consciousness and objective material existence being 'the axis upon which the whole philosophy of modern times turns' (*Parerga*, I, p. 15).

Schopenhauer claims that the problem in question, at least in traditional discussions of it, has been largely posed in the wrong terms, and that the solutions which have at various times been suggested are open to fatal objections. These solutions may be said to fall into three principal categories. First there are those which in one way or another simply acquiesce in the assumption that 'subject' and 'object' in the sense explained exist independently of one another. Here it may be maintained that the relation which subsists between them must simply be accepted as a brute fact or datum, not further accountable; or again that it can be interpreted as being fundamentally one of cause and effect – Locke, for instance, seems to

have assumed the operation of some sort of physical influence upon the knowing mind from without, causing it to become aware of sensible 'ideas'. Secondly there are those theories which treat the object as the fundamental factor, seeking to derive and explain the nature and status of the subject from this; of such a type are all theories which rest upon the supposition that the structure of reality can be characterized without reference to the mediation of a subject, the place of the latter within the general scheme of things being determinable from a consideration of what reality is like as a whole. Schopenhauer cites what he calls 'simple materialism' as the most consistent of the philosophical doctrines falling within this group; but others, such as those which attempt to treat ultimate reality as the embodiment of abstract concepts, or again as the expression of a divine will, are also included. Thirdly there are the theories that start not from the object but from the subject; Schopenhauer mentions Fichte as a proponent of this kind of view – in seeking to 'derive the *non-ego* from the *ego*, as a spider spins its web out of itself' (I, p. 43), he had produced the most purely 'subjectivist' as well as (in Schopenhauer's opinion) the most tedious work on philosophy ever written. Of the three types of theory referred to, the last two try to solve the problem of the relation subsisting between the knowing subject and the object known by relegating one or other of the terms of that relation to a subsidiary or inferior place; all three, however, in one form or another reflect fundamental misconceptions which vitiate their various approaches to the question from the very beginning.

Schopenhauer argues, in the first place, that the notion of the subject of knowledge as something independently identifiable and describable, in the manner often suggested, is unacceptable. This is to assume that it is a certain kind of entity (albeit of a peculiar 'insubstantial' kind) and hence that it can be talked about and known as other things can be talked about and known. But such a conception raises insuperable difficulties. On his view of the matter, the subject of knowledge is 'the supporter of the world, the condition of all phenomena', in the sense that its existence is a presupposition of the possibility

of knowledge and experience. But this logically implies that it cannot be treated as if it were itself an element *in* the world, an entity which is in principle capable of being apprehended along with other cognizable things: in one way its relation to the world as idea, to empirical reality, is comparable to the relation between the eye and the field of vision – 'the eye sees everything except itself' (III, p. 285). If it should be objected that the subject of knowledge can nevertheless be aware of itself by some form of introspective self-consciousness, and that in this way the searchlight of knowledge can, as it were, be directed back upon its source, Schopenhauer's reply is that such attempts to portray the knowing subject as a possible object of awareness lead nowhere: one finds oneself using absurd-sounding expressions like 'I know that I know' which – if they mean anything – have no other force than the original assertion 'I know' *tout court* (*FR* §41), the bare possibility of a certain linguistic form merely giving the illusion of access to a special mode of apprehension. This is not of course to say that one is justified in ruling out self-consciousness as properly understood – e.g. as the knowledge each of us has of himself as 'will': quite the contrary. Schopenhauer makes it clear that he is concerned here solely with the kind of self-awareness which (he thinks) is postulated by a particular type of epistemological theory.

Likewise the notion of an objective reality, set over against the subject and regarded as being independently knowable and describable, is equally unacceptable. For it amounts to the supposition that a sense can be given to the concept of *object* that takes no account of the dependence of its possible application upon conditions imposed by our forms of perception and thinking; a supposition which (as was seen earlier) Schopenhauer considered wholly mistaken, to be opposed by the Kantian insight that 'things and their whole mode of existence are inseparably bound up with our consciousness of them' (II, p. 171). How can we even *conceive* a world existing as 'unconditionally given' – that is to say, otherwise than in terms of what could be presented to us as perceiving subjects endowed with a certain sensory and intellectual equipment?

Finally, in the light of the points already made, the belief that it is legitimate to posit some sort of causal relation subsisting between subject and object must be completely rejected. Causal relations can be asserted to hold only between objects existing in the phenomenal world. Certainly our own bodies may properly be said to stand in causal relations to other bodies and physical objects and to interact with them; for inasmuch as these are all things which belong to the class of phenomenal entities, they conform to the 'universal forms of knowledge', of which causality is one. The same cannot however be true of the knowing subject itself; as the knower, never the known, it 'does not come under these forms, but is presupposed by them' (I, p. 5). Hence it must be wrong to represent it as causally acting upon or being causally acted upon by something else; the causal principle is inapplicable here, as it is in any context involving what lies beyond the possibility of experience. And this point may be generalized to rule out, not merely certain types of simple epistemological dualism, but also the other theories Schopenhauer has mentioned: those that try to derive the subject from the object, or alternatively seek to derive the object from the subject. Such doctrines necessarily involve the employment of the principle of sufficient reason in one form or other in their derivations: thus Fichte treats the *ego*, or subject, as 'ground', from which he goes on to deduce the *non-ego*, or objective world, as 'consequent', while 'realist' philosophers adopt the converse procedure. But neither approach is justifiable, since in both cases the conditions presupposed by all valid arguments of this kind are absent.

So much for the misconceptions which Schopenhauer claimed to have exposed in the systems of many of his predecessors. The concepts of *subject* and *object* have been applied in an unacceptable manner, their mutual relations have been misunderstood and mis-stated. The question now arises concerning what in his view constitutes a valid interpretation of these concepts.

At this stage, however, a critic might be inclined to raise objections against talking in such a way at all, arguing that an

abstract 'subject–object' terminology is necessarily inadequate as an instrument for tackling philosophical problems arising from a consideration of human knowledge, and suggesting that had Schopenhauer been more perspicacious he would have recognized its defectiveness. Such a critic could perhaps agree that the terms in which earlier epistemologists had formulated these problems were unsatisfactory, and that thus far Schopenhauer's attacks were justified. He might, for instance, allow that it is questionable whether any real meaning can be attached to the notion of a self-sufficient thinking consciousness conceived in abstraction from the physical attributes and powers which underlie our identification and differentiation of individual persons in the world. If we try to remove 'in thought' such characteristics, are we not in danger of emptying the conception of a conscious knowing being of significance? Again, can one entertain an idea of oneself that does not presuppose the existence of other objective things, with which one compares and contrasts one's own existence, the conception of something other than oneself being intrinsic to the conception of one's own self-identity? And it might be allowed, too, that from the side of what Schopenhauer calls the 'object', attempts to comprehend the world as it is 'in itself' – that is to say, independently of all actual or possible modes of experience or conceptualization – exhibit misunderstandings. Schopenhauer may therefore be right in so far as he wishes to maintain that endeavours to relate the knower to the reality known – whether causally or otherwise – are inevitably doomed to failure when the two terms of the relation are interpreted in some of the ways he has described. But then is it not arguable that any attempt whatsoever to formulate the problem of knowledge along these general lines may lead to comparable difficulties? The antithesis between knowing subject and object known, which Schopenhauer apparently accepts, seems merely to reflect in a dramatized 'material' mode the grammatical structure of sentences in which claims to knowledge are normally made; it provides no insight into the logical character of the concept of knowledge itself. On the contrary, it may be said to obscure this character. For, by setting all discus-

sion of it in abstract and artificial terms, it leads us to overlook or ignore the wide differences separating various distinguishable types of knowledge-claim, the different sorts of backing they may receive, and the different kinds of circumstance in which they may be made. It may cause us, too, to interpret the concept in the light of a variety of misleading models; in terms of perceptual analogies, for instance – philosophers have often spoken as if knowing something were essentially like seeing something – or again, in ways suggestive of transactions between agents and objects in physical space: models which all too easily produce notorious puzzles. It might indeed be claimed that the tendency to postulate some non-bodily entity, some cognitive immaterial substance, as the true referent of the subject-term in supposedly relational statements of the form 'I know *p*', itself receives encouragement from just this way of speaking. And, for all the scorn Schopenhauer on numerous occasions heaped upon ideas of the latter sort, is it clear that he himself, in some of his own references to the 'subject of knowledge', was altogether immune to criticism of the type he so liberally levelled against others?

I do not wish to argue that such objections wholly lack substance when considered in the context of some of the things Schopenhauer says, or to deny that there are obscurities in his account which seem partly to spring from a desire both to do justice to the limitations and restrictions which our condition as human observers and agents necessarily imposes upon our knowledge of reality and at the same time to present these limitations and restrictions from a point of view which in some way 'transcends' them or lies beyond them. There are questions here which will have to be taken up again at a later stage. For the present, however, it will be as well to try to understand certain features of Schopenhauer's theory as he goes on to develop them, without appraising in advance the interpretative scheme he adopts or anticipating the difficulties into which it might be expected to lead him: although a philosopher's terms of reference may be worse than useless when employed in connexion with certain interests and purposes, it does not follow that they must be wholly ill-adapted to some of the actual

problems he had in mind. The matters with which Schopenhauer was concerned were, as has already been sufficiently emphasized, of an exceedingly wide and all-embracing character, involving, *inter alia*, the provision of a comprehensive account of the nature and extent of our awareness of the world. This requires that we should achieve a proper understanding of our own natures as perceiving and thinking creatures; for we cannot separate or abstract the general form under which things present themselves to us from the structure of our perceptual and intellectual capacities and powers. Questions about the pervasive character of the perceptible world can thus (Schopenhauer wants to maintain) be formulated as questions about our own modes of thought and perception. One could put the point by saying that in distinction from earlier epistemologists, he did not recognize the existence of two independent sets of problems – one set relating to the character of ourselves as observers and investigators, the other set relating to the world considered as the object of our observations and investigations. Rather there is a *single* set, which may indifferently be referred to as being concerned with the nature of our knowledge and perception or as being concerned with the nature of empirical reality. *Subject* and *object* cannot, therefore, in the sense in which Schopenhauer used these notions, be considered in isolation from one another: as he expressed it in *The World as Will and Idea*, they are 'inseparable even for thought, for each of the two has meaning and existence only through and for the other, each exists with the other and vanishes with it. They limit each other immediately . . . The common and reciprocal nature of this limitation is shown by the fact that the essential and hence universal forms of all objects . . . may, without knowledge of the object, be discovered and fully known from a consideration of the subject, i.e. in Kantian language, they lie *a priori* in our consciousness' (I, p. 6). Subject and object are thus 'correlates' in Schopenhauer's system, in that it is not logically possible to conceive one without conceiving the other; to explain the notion of the cognizing subject is *ipso facto* to explain the notion of the object, and conversely. Hence he writes (*FR* §41): '. . . being subject means exactly as much as having an object,

and being object means as much as being known by the subject'; and goes on to remark that to this extent 'it is one and the same thing whether I say that objects have such and such inherent . . . determinations (*Bestimmungen*), or that the subject knows in such and such ways: one and the same thing whether I say that objects are divided into such and such classes, or that such and such different cognitive powers are intrinsic to the subject . . . Accordingly, it is all one whether we say "Sensibility and understanding are no more" or "The world is at an end." '

To interpret these passages it is useful to keep in mind the Kantian background against which they were written. Schopenhauer himself explicitly compares Kant's conception of the 'unity of apperception' – regarded as a necessary condition of our experience of objects and consequently as presupposed by the existence of all objective phenomena – with his own notion of the 'subject of knowledge': the latter, like Kant's unitary consciousness, is not itself a possible object of experience, and is thus neither describable nor knowable as a 'substance' or 'entity' possessing empirical properties. It is open to us to try to depict it in a purely figurative way: for example, it might be compared to a sort of 'indivisible point', representing the focus of mental activity. But it must be realized that we stand at a place where thought, let alone proofs, can scarcely reach, and what we say can never really be more than a kind of metaphor or image (III, p. 13).[1] There is, however, another less misleading way which suggests itself of partially characterizing what is at issue here. This consists, not in attempting to apply

1. These and other related observations about the 'knowing subject' invite comparison with Ludwig Wittgenstein's remarks in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* concerning the 'presenting' or 'metaphysical' subject. Like both Kant and Schopenhauer, Wittgenstein distinguishes the subject in this sense from the empirical self or individual which is an object of experience amongst others. Thus it does not 'belong to the world but it is a limit of the world' (*Tractatus* 5.632). Again, as with Schopenhauer, it is compared to the eye which cannot see itself: 'You say that this case is altogether like that of the eye and the field of sight. But really you do *not* see the eye' (5.633). Such affinities can hardly be fortuitous; Schopenhauer was in fact a formative influence in Wittgenstein's early philosophical development. See below, pp. 278–82.

spatial and geometrical terms which must in the nature of the case be out of place, but instead in investigating and making explicit the functions of the knowing subject, since such functions are in an important sense constitutive of its essential character. These functions can from one point of view be discerned through an examination of the nature of our experience as conscious beings confronting and classifying a world of objects ordered in space and time and obeying causal laws; for the forms under which things objectively present themselves to us – space, time, and causality – correspond to and are determined by the cognitive powers of the subject. Thus, in Schopenhauer's terminology, the 'subjective correlate' of what appear objectively as spatial and temporal determinations is 'sensibility'; the 'subjective correlate' of causal determinations is 'understanding'. It may therefore be said of space, time, and causality that they belong 'exclusively to the *object*, and yet, as they are essential to the object *as such*, and as the object again is essential to the subject *as such*, they may be discovered from the subject, i.e. they may be known *a priori*, and so far they are to be regarded as the common limits of both' (I, p. 32). In one way, and at the risk of some possible oversimplification, we may interpret Schopenhauer as claiming that what constitutes empirical reality is definable by reference to a certain framework; but since the employment of the framework in question is a necessity of ordinary thought and language, its character can at the same time be said to be partially definitive of ourselves considered as knowing and thinking beings. Thus we can affirm *a priori* of any given individual that his experience will present itself under such-and-such forms. It follows that every individual is to this extent 'bearer of the subject' (*Träger des erkennenden Subjekts*) in the sense Schopenhauer here has in mind.

Similar considerations may be regarded as throwing light upon another and *prima facie* somewhat mysterious remark Schopenhauer makes in the same connexion, when he claims that the assertion 'Objects exist for me' ('*Für mich sind Objekte*') is really equivalent to the statement that I am subject, which is again equivalent to 'I know' (*FR* §41). State-

ments affirming the existence of e.g. objects or properties – in general and without further specification – have a peculiar unrestricted character which notoriously makes it difficult to assimilate them to ordinary existence-claims about the contents or features of the world. On the one hand, since they involve universal categories or 'formal concepts' in the particular manner they do, it does not seem plausible to treat them as essentially similar to straightforward empirical propositions involving specific 'descriptive' concepts, such as 'Giraffes exist'; on the other it seems unduly paradoxical to regard them as meaningless, if only because one is inclined to say that they are clearly (almost too clearly) true. How then are they to be interpreted? One possible line of approach might be to treat a statement affirming (say) the existence of objects as partially referring, though in a rather curious fashion, to the basic structure of the conceptual scheme we employ to characterize our experience and to communicate with one another; on such an interpretation, anyone who called in question the existence of objects as such would in effect be challenging the validity, or perhaps the usefulness, of the scheme we normally employ. In a somewhat parallel manner we can understand Schopenhauer, in the passage cited above, to be claiming that if we speak absolutely generally of objects existing in relation to ourselves, what we say must embody an implicit reference to the interpretative apparatus which, as 'bearers of the subject', we bring to our experience. And here, it could be said, lies the kernel of his notion of the world as idea or representation, the basis of his insistence upon the necessary interdependence of subject and object. Admittedly his views are formulated in a way that involves a liberal use of metaphor and paradox; admittedly, too, much that he asserts in elaborating them gives rise to considerable difficulties. Even so, this should not prevent us from recognizing what I believe to be the fundamental notions that underlie them. The nature, the constitution, of that which we understand to be 'objective reality' is not something we can be considered to arrive at or 'read off' in a passive fashion simply from what 'lies before us'. Instead it must be realized that it is we who contribute the standards of objectivity and subjectivity,

of reality and unreality, implicit in our judgements concerning what we are aware of, and who supply the conditions of valid explanation and inference in terms of which we render experience intelligible; and that it is upon the common employment and acceptance of such criteria that all customary knowledge and communication finally rest. Furthermore, and connected with this, it should be recognized that the ordinary conception of ourselves as 'knowing subjects' cannot be understood or given a possible sense without acknowledging its dependence upon the correlative conception of a spatially and temporally ordered world of distinguishable things and events, in which we, regarded from a phenomenal point of view, figure as particular objects. The failure to take account of these considerations constitutes, indeed, the common mistake of all theories of knowledge which treat the individual knowing subject as an independent self-sufficient entity, whether the essence of this entity is thought to lie in a capacity for pure ratiocination or whether, alternatively, it is thought to consist in the ability merely to apprehend and coordinate sequences of simple 'ideas' or sensations of the kind to which eighteenth-century empiricists like Condillac referred when they spoke of 'modifications of the soul'.

Space, Time, and Causality

According to Schopenhauer, the framework in terms of which we universally comprehend our experience is determined throughout by the principle of sufficient reason. And at first sight this might seem surprising. For it will be remembered that the principle, as initially introduced, was spoken of as everywhere authorizing us to look for and demand a reason, the type of reason it is appropriate to seek varying according to the context and the sphere of inquiry. But it may then seem hard to understand how it can have more than a very tenuous connexion with the considerations advanced in the last section concerning the conditions and structure of our knowledge of the world. It might, perhaps, be allowed that some affinity is discernible between causality (regarded as one of the 'forms belonging to the subject') on the one hand, and the principle

of sufficient reason on the other, inasmuch as Schopenhauer conceives the latter in one of its specifications as authorizing the search for causal explanations of phenomena. But the matter is surely different in the case of the other two structural notions he mentions in connexion with the idea of objective reality – space and time. How, it may be asked, can our awareness of spatial and temporal relations be viewed as representing particular applications of the principle? For there does not seem to be anything obviously analogous to causal inference and explanation in our thinking about space and time. Nor do the difficulties end here. The principle of sufficient reason was also described as comprehending logical and analytic reasoning, together with the methods by which propositions may be validated and established. But if so, then while from the former point of view it seemed to be too narrow for the role being assigned to it, from this point of view it seems to be too wide.

To take the last point first. Although Schopenhauer certainly regarded the forms of space, time, and causality as playing an indispensable part in ordering our experience, he did not think that the structure of our knowledge in general could be adequately characterized by reference to these forms alone. This was because – to put it roughly – the field of our ordinary cognition was not limited to knowledge of a purely perceptual or sensory character, but included as well what he called 'abstract knowledge', the matter of which was the concept: 'concepts,' he wrote, 'make up a distinct class of ideas, existing only in the mind of man, and entirely different from the ideas of perception' (I, p. 50), the subjective 'correlate' being here 'reason', just as the subjective correlates of the perceptual forms were found to be 'sensibility' and 'understanding'. Within the area of such knowledge the principle of sufficient reason accordingly has a specific kind of application. What Schopenhauer has to say about this, and about 'abstract' or discursive thought in general, we shall consider in due course.

For the moment, however, let us look more closely at his account of space and time. Space and time have notoriously been a constant source of philosophical bewilderment and difficulty. On one hand, it seems as if they are essential to any kind

of experience of an objective reality: is it possible even to *imagine* the existence of a non-temporal, non-spatial world? On the other, it seems exceptionally hard to provide an acceptable analysis of such all-pervasive features of experience. Can one, for example, treat 'space' as a kind of general term, representing a 'universal' to which particular spaces stand as instances? This is implausible, for (as Kant observed) particular spaces seem to be related to space in general not in this way but rather as parts to a whole. Again, we might try to think of spatial and temporal characteristics as being among the perceivable properties of independently existing things, characteristics which we can empirically note and 'abstract', in this way forming the concepts of *space* and *time* through attending to the data of experience. But does not the very notion of a thing already involve the conception of something with a specifiable spatio-temporal character and location? Thus Schopenhauer points out that it appears as if space were something 'from which nothing that exists can escape without ceasing to be anything at all', going on to argue that although we may be able to 'think away' everything that is presented in space and time, we cannot do the same with space and time themselves – 'the hand can leave hold of everything except itself' (II, p. 202).

As has already been indicated, Schopenhauer in fact adopted an essentially Kantian position concerning the status of space and time. They are forms of our 'sensibility', which is to say, among other things, that we are so constituted that everything we are aware of in our sense-experience must appear to us in spatial and temporal terms. Thus the spatio-temporal features of the world are of 'subjective' origin: to use a worn analogy, it is as if we were born with an irremovable pair of spectacles upon our noses, through which everything is seen as being ordered and arranged in a particular way. How such a theory could ever be certified as correct might appear to present a problem to its proponents, for there can be no question of taking the 'spectacles' off in order to make comparisons. Schopenhauer considered, however, that its truth was guaranteed by other considerations. Not only does it avoid the obvious difficulties that beset alternative views: it is also the sole inter-

pretation which is capable of accounting for our ability to assert with absolute certainty and independently of empirical observation a large number of propositions about the nature of space and time; we know, for instance, in a manner that does not permit of doubt, that space is three-dimensional, that there is only one time-order in which events can occur, and so on. Most significantly of all, the interpretation in question embodies (as Kant made clear) an insight into the true character of mathematics, making apparent for the first time how it is that we can have *a priori* knowledge of the truths of mathematics, these truths being at the same time universally valid within experience. Thus our recognition of the necessity inherent in certain spatial relationships, as exhibited in the propositions of Euclidean geometry, derives not from induction from observed instances, nor again from our understanding of the 'abstract concepts' in terms of which we describe these relationships, but 'immediately from the form of all knowledge, which we are conscious of *a priori*' (I, p. 94). Schopenhauer implies, in effect, that by some kind of 'pure' (i.e. non-empirical) intuition of figures in space we are able to read off the truth, not merely of the axioms upon which the Euclidean system is founded, but also of the theorems Euclid deduced from these axioms; and this leads him to undertake a lengthy criticism of the manner in which the proof and demonstration of geometrical propositions is customarily carried out. For on the usual interpretation Euclidean geometry is treated as an axiomatic system, whereby the constituent theorems are deduced from other theorems and from the initial postulates of the system by the application of purely logical principles of inference. This, however, is a 'useless precaution', a 'crutch for sound legs', since we can already perceive the necessary truth of any particular theorem by simple 'intuition' and quite independently of the logical derivation provided – the latter was 'only thought out afterwards in addition' and is in any case incapable of affording us any insight into *why* the theorem in question holds. The true position becomes plain when we consider the status of the Euclidean axioms themselves: there can at least be no question of our acknowledging *these* to be true

in virtue of some prior demonstration. But if not here, why elsewhere? – 'the axioms themselves have no more immediate evidence than any other geometrical proposition, but only more simplicity on account of their smaller content' (I, p. 98).

Schopenhauer's account of arithmetic is much briefer, but it follows the same lines; the argument in this case being that our recognition of the universal validity of arithmetical formulae rests upon 'pure intuition in time'. The connexion with time is established through the notion of counting. On the one hand, this notion is to be explained in terms of the repeated application of a certain procedure, and can thus be seen to involve the idea of succession, or temporal sequence. On the other, counting is fundamentally the 'only arithmetical operation': by this Schopenhauer presumably means that the various arithmetical procedures – for instance adding, multiplying, and so forth in simple arithmetic – can in some way be 'reduced' to counting, since he goes on to speak of the latter as constituting the 'whole method' of arithmetic, this being simply 'a method of abbreviating counting' which the arithmetical notation renders possible. In the light of such considerations, it is argued that every particular sum or equation in arithmetic may be verified as correct by reference to temporal intuition alone; that is to say without appeal to the observed facts of experience and at the same time without resort to any kind of logical derivation from propositions already assumed to be true. Since, however, our recognition of the necessity of such equations depends upon our awareness of time considered as an *a priori* condition and form of all experience, and not upon purely conceptual knowledge, it follows that they are 'synthetic', not analytic; and Herder is sharply scolded for claiming that expressions like '$7 + 5 = 12$' really represent 'identical propositions' (*FR* §39).[1]

Whatever plausibility these ideas may once have appeared to possess, more recent developments both in mathematics itself and in the philosophy of mathematics make it hard to accept

1. The reference is to J. G. Herder's *Metacritique of the Critique of Pure Reason* (1799), in which the entire Kantian doctrine of geometry and arithmetic was rejected in favour of one that stressed the essentially tautological character of mathematical propositions.

the principal thought that underlies them. The construction of non-Euclidean geometries for example, and the application of one such geometry to physical space in the formulation of the general theory of relativity, may be said to have set the problem of the relation between geometry and empirical reality in a radically different light from that in which it presented itself to Schopenhauer. Thus his insistence upon the essential role of perceptual intuition in geometrical reasoning, by means of which we are made aware that spatial figures must necessarily conform to Euclidean requirements, could be held to rest upon a confusion. The propositions of geometry, in so far as it is regarded as a purely *a priori* discipline (and that was how he did regard it) are not descriptive of the empirical properties of actual figures in space, nor even of the properties of imagined figures descried in imagined space; from this point of view, a system like the Euclidean may be exhibited as a purely abstract calculus, the initial axioms of which are wholly devoid of factual content. On the other hand, this does not mean that such a system may not be given an application to reality, in the sense that the concepts it employs – e.g. *point*, *straight line* – may be interpreted in ways that make it possible to use it in order to talk about things we empirically perceive. If such an interpretation of the geometry has been independently fixed and established according to certain rules (for example, that a straight line is to be understood as the path of a light ray), it becomes an empirical matter whether its axioms and theorems (so interpreted) are true, a matter to be decided by physical observations and experiments: the geometry in question may now be represented as having the status of an empirical theory. It is a mistake, however, to run these distinguishable aspects of geometry together, and to suppose that we have to do with a set of propositions the factual truth of which can be certified by an *a priori* insight into the nature of spatial relations. Schopenhauer himself admits that the necessary truth we may ascribe to a geometrical theorem is not to be accounted for in terms of a particular figure drawn on paper, since the drawing may be defective. Does this, however, justify the conclusion that we have 'pure' intuitions or perceptions of space 'entirely

independent of the senses', and that it is only through such pure perception that the necessity of propositions in geometry becomes apparent to us? Is the position not rather that, in so far as we do accept them as necessary, we shall refuse to allow them to be disconfirmed or falsified by any examples drawn from sense-experience, thereby treating a given theorem as a *criterion* of whether e.g. some particular figure has been correctly drawn or measured? And if this is so, our using the theorem in such a way would appear to point, not to the existence of an *a priori* intuition in Schopenhauer's sense, but to the manner in which we understand and are prepared to employ certain concepts: to take an example Schopenhauer himself considers, we may simply exclude the possibility of applying the expression 'equilateral triangle' to a figure whose interior angles are not equal. Schopenhauer was no doubt impressed by the consideration that it appears in some way unimaginable that an axiom or theorem of Euclidean geometry should not hold, and felt that it is just this impossibility that the presentation of the axiom or theorem in terms of figures in space makes transparent: how, for instance, can I form the picture of a space enclosed by two straight lines? But to this it could be replied that the 'unimaginability' involved essentially reflects our adherence to a certain system of concepts; given such adherence, we shall not count a line as a straight line, or a figure as satisfying a certain description, unless the geometrical requirements are satisfied.

Schopenhauer's account of arithmetic also raises difficulties. Few present-day philosophers would be prepared to follow him in what he says concerning the status of formulae like '$7 + 5 = 12$'; on this question the modern position, which has largely developed in the light of investigations into the foundations of mathematics undertaken at the turn of the last century by Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell, involves the rejection of the Kantian synthetic *a priori* conception of arithmetic and could indeed be said to approximate more closely to the view Schopenhauer attributes to Herder than to his own. In other words, arithmetical formulae are no longer regarded as being in some mysterious way 'about' or 'anticipatory of' our ex-

perience, although they obviously can be (and are) used in empirical contexts: thus, to take a simple example, if I know that there are seven chocolates in one of two boxes and five in the other, I know that there are twelve altogether, the 'inference' (if it can be so dignified) representing an application of the formula '$7 + 5 = 12$'. But such a formula simply embodies a rule according to which certain numerical expressions can be transformed into other (equivalent) expressions: so understood, arithmetical reasoning can be seen as being in essentials no more than a kind of conceptual technique, utilizable as a means of exhibiting the implications of what we say when we describe or characterize features of our experience in numerical terms. Now it might perhaps be suggested that when Schopenhauer spoke of the reduction of arithmetical operations to 'counting' he had something of this sort in mind; but if so, his mode of expression was, to say the least, highly misleading. For it will be remembered that he wrote as if such operations *consisted* in counting, and as if this were something which exhibited the essential connexion between arithmetical calculation and our awareness of successive instants in time. In the light of what has just been said, however, it would appear that counting (in the sense, that is, in which one counts perceivable objects), while a *condition* of the empirical application of procedures like subtracting, multiplying, and so on, cannot be identified with such procedures. The position is rather that counting is one of the ways (measurement is another) by which the data for computation in the context of factual inquiries or practical problems are established. I may, for instance, wish to divide a number of things – gold sovereigns, say – equally among a group of people, and arithmetic will provide me with a convenient means of doing this; but I must first estimate the number of sovereigns at my disposal and the number of persons concerned, and it is by counting coins and heads, not by working out sums, that that is achieved.

It might, however, be claimed that when Schopenhauer talked about 'counting' his real concern was with the way in which the series of natural numbers is generated. Thus he writes that 'all counting consists in the repeated setting down

of unity – only for the purpose of always knowing how often we have already set down unity do we mark it each time with another word; these are the numerals' (II, p. 204); and elsewhere he says that we can only 'reach the number *ten* by passing through all the preceding numbers' – hence I know that 'where ten are, there are also eight, six, four' (*FR* §38). These remarks are not perhaps as clear as one could wish; but if the problem is conceived to be that of determining the rule according to which the number series is constructed, it is surely one of mathematical or logical analysis and not of tracing psychologically the stages in a hypothetical process of thought. Hence it is difficult to see how its discussion should give rise to considerations demonstrating the essentially temporal character of arithmetic. It is of course true that if I count up to ten I do something which takes time, but my ability to carry out this performance correctly cannot plausibly be said to rest upon my apprehension of an inherent characteristic of the temporal process. Rather it exhibits my knowledge of a certain accepted procedure; if I do not follow it I shall not be allowed to be 'counting' in the relevant sense.

Generally speaking, Schopenhauer did not give evidence of holding a very high opinion of mathematical thinking; in this respect at least he resembled his arch-enemy Hegel, although it is worth noting that, unlike him, Hegel appears to have thought that the necessary propositions of arithmetic and geometry were analytic. Nevertheless, despite the comparative brevity of his discussion of the subject, what Schopenhauer says helps to explain why he maintained that the 'forms' of space and time could be treated as falling under his principle of sufficient reason, and why he believed it justifiable in this connexion to postulate a 'principle of sufficient reason of being' (*principium rationis sufficientis essendi*) as one of the specific forms the general principle takes. In accordance with this, it is held that every part of space and time stands in determinate relations to other parts of space and time, our insight into the essential character of these relations being partially exhibited in our intuitive recognition of the truths of geometry and arithmetic. Thus equality of the sides of a triangle is the *ratio*

essendi of equality of its angles; although the relation between the 'reason' and the 'consequent' here is a necessary one, it is not a causal relation or a relation of logical entailment. So understood, the notion of 'reason of being' is treated as the key idea in terms of which the nature of our apprehension of space and time as a whole may be characterized. It is argued, for instance, that each temporal instant is dependent upon its predecessor, and is in a sense implied by it – only in so far as one instant has elapsed can another come into being: in this manner *succession* is held to constitute the essence of time. Likewise *position* is central to the idea of space; to speak of the position of anything is to indicate the relations in which it stands to other things similarly locatable in space, space itself being 'nothing more than that possibility of the reciprocal determination of its parts by each other' (I, p. 9). Both space and time can therefore be exhaustively defined in terms of such relations of dependence, and for this reason are said to have a 'merely relative existence': by this, Schopenhauer seems partly to mean that any indication of the time of a particular occurrence, or of the place at which something is situated, always involves an implicit reference to other 'parts' of time and space. If, for example, I am asked when something occurred, I may answer by temporally relating the occurrence to some other moment or occasion whose position on the time-scale is already known or understood by the person to whom I am talking: similarly, if I am asked where something is, I may always reply by indicating its relations to other spatial points or areas. There is, Schopenhauer implies, necessarily no escape from this interdependence among our spatial and temporal judgements, and theoretically the questions 'Where?' and 'When?' can be pressed without limit. If it were suggested that we do in practice find a terminus in the spatial or temporal positions which, as speakers or observers, we occupy at a given moment and to which we can refer by demonstratives like 'here' and 'now', Schopenhauer might have replied (I think) that of any speaker who makes such a reference to his own location it can still be intelligibly asked where he is speaking from or at what time, these questions being once again answerable in

relational terms. A more immediate objection that presents itself here concerns the legitimacy of using the language of *rational* dependence in describing relations of the sort Schopenhauer has in mind, whatever attractions such a way of speaking may have held for him from the standpoint of preserving his architectonic. In a general way, his discussion of these matters appears to suffer from a preoccupation with the idea that it is possible to deal at one stroke both with the nature of mathematical truth and with the nature of space and time; his account of each is consequently infected with obscurities and ambiguities.

Schopenhauer now sets out to show more specifically how our consciousness of a world of discriminable material things, classifiable under different heads and into various kinds, presupposes the application of a spatio-temporal scheme governed, in the manner outlined, by the principle of sufficient reason. It is clear, in the first place, that empirical reality comprises what may be called a 'multiplicity' of phenomenal appearances. This plurality is, however, only possible through space and time. For if we inquire into the meaning of the notion of multiplicity as it is employed here, we see that it may be resolved into the conception of coexistent and successive phenomena, and *coexistence* and *succession* are spatio-temporal concepts. On this account space and time may be referred to as the *principium individuationis*, since it is only in virtue of them that reality can present itself to us as a world populated by a variety of individual objects. But although each is necessary, neither space nor time is by itself sufficient to constitute for us a universe of material bodies of the sort we are familiar with. The following considerations make this clear. We might, for instance, at first think that space alone was sufficient, in so far as the notion of being spatially extended seems to be essential to the idea of a physical thing. But of course further reflection informs us that the idea of a material object involves the notion of something persisting or enduring through time: thus time must be integral to the conception of material reality. All the same, it would be wrong to suppose that persistence or endurance in the sense in question is a purely temporal idea, since time itself

comprises no more than bare sequence, one moment or event following another in endless succession. The persistence of an object, on the other hand, is 'recognized by contrast with the *changes* going on in other objects *coexisting* with it', and co-existence implies, crudely speaking, the thought of things lying 'side by side', which is a spatial conception (*FR* § 18). Hence it must be just as impossible to conceive of material objects existing in a purely temporal world as it is to conceive of their existence in a purely spatial world, supposing worlds of either kind to be imaginable. Both spatial and temporal characteristics are in fact tightly and in the last analysis inseparably intertwined within the notion of a material thing.

If space and time are joint conditions of our awareness of material objects, they are equally conditions of the experience of objective change, as involving causal interaction and connexion between phenomena; indeed, to say that they are conditions of the first and to say that they are conditions of the second comes in the end to much the same thing. In Schopenhauer's words:

> The law of causality receives its meaning and necessity only from this, that the essence of change does not consist simply in mere variation of conditions (*Zustände*) in themselves, but rather in the fact that at the *same part of space* there is now *one* condition or state and then *another*, and at one and the same point of time there is *here* one state and *there* another state: only this reciprocal limitation of space and time by each other gives meaning, and at the same time necessity, to a rule according to which change must take place.

And he adds:

> What is determined by the law of causality is therefore not the succession of states in mere time, but that succession in respect of a particular space, and not merely the existence of states at a particular place, but in this place at a particular point of time. (I, p. 11)

The full import of this passage is somewhat obscure, but at least part of what Schopenhauer is saying seems to be that both the description of the conditions under which a change is

causally produced and the description of that change itself essentially involve references to spatial as well as temporal factors; we must be able to say where the change in question took place, indicate the position and configuration of things prior to its occurrence, and so forth. Thus causality can be said to 'unite' space and time. But of matter too it can be said that it represents 'the union of space and time', and this similarity turns out to be in no way fortuitous; for matter, Schopenhauer claims, is in its essence nothing more than causality – 'the whole being and essence of matter consists in the orderly change which one part of it brings about in another part' (I, p. 10).

Schopenhauer's peremptory equation of matter with causality, which he introduces at an early stage of his main work with the air of one drawing attention to what is no more than a self-evident truth, may well give us pause. Is it not a typical example of that very 'tendency of the mind to work with abstract and too widely comprehended concepts' which Schopenhauer himself attacked in various parts of his writings, claiming, for instance, that in the hands of many speculative philosophers notions like 'substance, ground, cause, the good, perfection, necessity and very many others' come to be 'tossed about' without thought of their possible use and interpretation in concrete situations? And it might be urged that when discussing in philosophy such topics as matter and causality, it is better to follow Wittgenstein's recommendation to 'bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use'[1] and to examine their actual employment in particular contexts, than to indulge in such incautious identification of high-level abstractions as Schopenhauer here undertakes. In any event, Schopenhauer seems to be exposed to the more specific objection that in so far as causality involves change in the manner he has described, there must always be assumed to be something in which changes occur; does not causality therefore presuppose the independent reality of matter, at least in the sense of constituting the necessary subject of all change? Nevertheless, despite the vague and exaggerated fashion in which he formu-

1. *Philosophical Investigations*, I, §116.

lates it, and the somewhat haphazard character of the surrounding argument, a genuine point can, I think, be extracted from what he is saying. In the first place, he surely wishes to emphasize that both from the standpoint of common sense and from that of physical science the world is viewed as a causally ordered system, conforming to determinate laws and exhibiting in every aspect predictable patterns and regularities among phenomena. Furthermore, the conception we have of the world can be adequately characterized only by taking account of the causal properties and powers we assign to the things we pick out and identify within it. Physical objects cannot (as seems to be implied by some empiricists) be regarded as no more than bundles or collections of independently identifiable sensations, the notion of causality being itself subsequently derived or 'abstracted' from the apprehension of observed sequences among such sensations: rather we should recognize that causality, along with space and time which its operation presupposes, is built into the notion of a physical thing at the outset; if we conceive something as a material object then we envisage it as being capable, under given conditions, of causally affecting or bringing about changes in other phenomena – including our own bodies as 'objects among objects' – in certain ways. Even the notion of space-occupation, which belongs to the concept of a body as an essential attribute, is not a purely spatial conception. For it can be characterized from one point of view as 'that *way of acting* which belongs to *all* bodies without exception', inasmuch as it involves the idea of *repulsion*; a body repels other bodies that are said to 'contest its space', and to do away with this (causal) idea is to do away with the notion of a material body itself (II, p. 224). Again, a material body or particle may be conceived as possessing, likewise as an essential property, the capacity or power to *attract* other bodies or particles.

It is evident from the context in which he says these things that Schopenhauer was partly influenced by what he took to be the mechanistic presuppositions of the natural science of his time; in particular, by the concept of matter widely (if not entirely accurately) attributed to Newton, whereby inertia and

gravity were both held to be inherent properties of material particles. At the same time Schopenhauer thought of all science as being in many ways no more than an extension of ordinary modes of apprehension and knowledge; hence it did not appear to him to be necessary, in this connexion, to distinguish sharply between the conception of matter presupposed by scientific theorizing and our more everyday views of the constitution of the material world. The common-sense notion of material reality, just as much as the more specialized scientific one, is framed in causal terms, matter being in both cases 'through-and-through causality'; causality is, in fact, 'something we bring to every reality, as its basis, in thinking it' (*FR* §21).[1] Now, as was observed earlier, Schopenhauer held that the subjective correlate of causality was 'understanding' – 'to know causality is its one function, its only power'. Hence it could be affirmed that 'all causality, and so all matter, or the whole of reality, is only for the understanding, through the understanding, and in the understanding' (I. p. 13).

Schopenhauer took some pride in having reduced the functions of the understanding to one, feeling that in this respect his theory contrasted favourably with that of Kant; Kant had found it necessary to assign no less than twelve categories to the understanding, eleven of these being, in Schopenhauer's view, quite superfluous, 'blind windows'. Certainly, from the point of view of his general doctrine, such economy possessed notable advantages. For, just as he had argued that our knowledge of space and time could be completely explained in terms of one form of the principle of sufficient reason, so it could now be contended that our knowledge of the world in so far as it presents itself to us as a system of interacting and changing material things was similarly intelligible in terms of another form of that all-embracing principle. In this form it emerged as 'the principle of sufficient reason of becoming', or less cum-

1. In his *Aphorismen*, Lichtenberg, an eighteenth-century writer Schopenhauer much admired, made a somewhat similar point when he wrote: 'Man is a cause-seeking creature; in the spiritual order he could be called the cause-seeker. Other minds perhaps think things in other – to us inconceivable – categories.'

brously 'the law of causality'. Schopenhauer tends to put this 'law' forward under different and not always consistent formulations; in general, however, he regards it as stipulating that for every 'change' that occurs in the phenomenal world there must have been some 'state' or condition of things, occurring antecedently, that caused it to take place, where to say of any condition or set of conditions that it is the cause of such a change is simply to say that a change of the type in question regularly follows upon the presence of conditions of the type in question – 'this sort of following we call *resulting*' (*FR* §20). Thus Schopenhauer did not envisage causal connexions between phenomena as involving the existence of some sort of quasi-logical 'bond' or 'tie' which mysteriously unites the cause with the effect; here his position did not differ from that of Hume and others who have attacked that idea. Nor did he claim that our knowledge of what is caused by what in the phenomenal sphere could be arrived at other than by experience: all that we can affirm with *a priori* certainty is that if any change occurs, there must have been *some* cause or causes to which it can be attributed; *what*, in any given case, caused a specific event is a purely empirical matter. He points out, moreover, that the actual causal antecedents of a particular occurrence may be many and complex, a fact which common references in ordinary speech to *the* cause of an event tend to obscure, for in making such references we tend to pick out only the last or decisive condition from among a whole set of circumstances, all of which may have been causally necessary for the production of the event we are concerned to explain.

It was perhaps misleading of Schopenhauer to speak in this context of the 'law of causality'; such an expression suggests that the principle in question is a kind of empirical hypothesis, which is not at all what he had in mind. For him it is essentially something in terms of which we necessarily relate and order all the elements of perceptual experience, whether as ordinary practical observers and agents or in the capacity of scientific investigators and theorizers. Hence it is out of place to talk as if we could empirically become apprised of counter-instances to it; but equally, it cannot be treated simply as a heuristic

maxim which we can choose to adopt or abandon at will. In his own words, it is a 'transcendental principle', one which 'fixes and determines, *prior* to all experience', what is in any way possible within the range of objective experience (*FR* §20). At this point, however, a number of questions arise concerning the role he wishes to assign to it. It may, for example, be asked how exactly it is supposed to operate so as to present us with that objective world whose structure can only be explained by reference to it. Why, for instance, should it be thought that our basic modes of interpreting and categorizing our experience are dependent upon the fact (if it is a fact) that we adhere to a principle of the kind described? Schopenhauer may be right in claiming that the system or framework in terms of which we identify and organize elements in our experience is impregnated by causal ideas to an extent not sufficiently recognized by philosophers, and that this throws an important light upon our nature and intellectual make-up; but is it a condition of our being able to operate with such a system that we should assume *every* event to be susceptible of a causal explanation in the manner suggested? Moreover, Schopenhauer speaks as if it were the case, not merely that we *assume* the causal principle to be everywhere valid, but that experience is such that it *must* conform to it. But how is this claim to be justified? Even if it is true that we approach and try to interpret the world in certain ways, does that by itself guarantee that what occurs will necessarily and in all circumstances prove amenable to the patterns we seek to impose upon it?

Many of the difficulties arising from Schopenhauer's treatment of the role of causality in our knowledge can, I think, be traced to his failure to distinguish clearly between various considerations, all of which tend to be grouped together under a single head in the course of his discussion; as a result conceptual, methodological, and psychological or phenomenological issues come to be entangled with one another. Such confusion is particularly evident in his analysis of the process of perception, to which we must now turn. This process is held to consist essentially in the intuitive 'understanding of the cause from the effect'; at the same time it is apparently maintained that,

because perception (so conceived) involves or presupposes the idea of causation, this by itself is sufficient to demonstrate the universal applicability and necessity of the causal principle throughout experience in the ways previously explained.

Perception and Sensation

Schopenhauer has so far been concerned with our knowledge of the world solely from the point of view of its formal structure; his theory of perception is partly put forward in order to make clear the source from which this knowledge derives its material or content. According to him, the original data of our empirical awareness of things, the 'starting point' from which perception proceeds, are given solely through sensation; it is only on the basis of what sensation provides that the intellect, comprising the forms of sensibility and understanding, can operate to give us a world 'extended in space, varying in respect of form, persistent through all time as regards matter' (I, p. 14). The fact remains, however, that mere sensations – visual, tactual, auditory, and so on – represent no more than the 'raw material' of perception; they are merely something felt 'in the immediate object' (i.e. the body) of the subject, and as such refer to nothing beyond themselves; 'what the eye, the ear, the hand feels is not perception, it is merely its data' (ibid.). From this we might suppose that Schopenhauer after all envisaged the activity of the mind in perception to be really no more than a kind of 'synthesizing' one, the data of the various senses being brought together and formed into bundles, these bundles representing what we are really talking about when we speak of perceiving physical objects. But such an interpretation would be mistaken. As was noticed earlier, he claimed that the notion of a physical object comprised the idea of something causally operative in relation to other things, including our own bodies; and his conception of what occurs in sense-perception can be said to reflect this contention. Physical objects, conceived as things that we can see, touch, and so forth, cannot be 'reduced' to the sensations and feelings we have when we see and touch them – 'the sensation I have in pressing against a table with my hand contains no representation of a

firm cohesion of parts in that object, nor indeed anything at all like it', and it is only when my understanding passes from that sensation to its cause 'that it constructs for itself a body having the properties of solidity, impenetrability, and hardness' (*FR* §21). In other words, ordinary perception is to be explained as a process by which the understanding, 'by means of its one simple function', refers sensations to their causes; it is only thus that we become aware of a visible tangible world of material things. This process is held to be an immediate one, and not something of which we are in the normal way conscious: 'the cause presents itself to us without our noticing the sensation apart from it'. Nevertheless, that such a process must occur is something verifiable by reference to various experimental findings, including optical and physiological facts concerning what happens when rays of light strike the retina of the eye; from these it is clear, for example, that 'if seeing consisted in mere sensation we should perceive the impression of the object turned upside down'.

Schopenhauer's theory of perception must raise difficulties for the most sympathetic commentator, whether on general grounds or when it is considered in the light of what he says in other places in his work. In the first place, the relevance of the physiological considerations he adduces in support of his view is open to challenge. The physiologist may, it is true, be able to give a detailed account of what happens in the organism when we are said to see something, and his account will be a causal one in as much as it mentions such things as the effect produced upon certain areas of the brain or parts of the nervous system by e.g. retinal stimulation by light. But to provide such an account is not necessarily to talk about *sensations*, nor would it appear to offer evidence for the claim that in visual perception we are in some way aware of bare sensory data from which the understanding goes on to draw conclusions as to their causes. Optical theories about what happens when rays of light pass through the lens of the eye do not imply that we are at some level of consciousness sensorily aware of an inverted image on the retina which we then proceed to rectify on the basis of our knowledge of 'the direction in which the ray im-

pinged': in the context of optics and physiology, the question 'How do we see?' is not interpretable as a question concerning the nature of certain hypothetical skills and knowledge deployed in the carrying out of a particular activity. And this apart, the whole conception of perception as a passage from effects to causes in the manner indicated appears, as William James pointed out,[1] to be peculiar in any event. It would seem at least to be a condition of the possibility of speaking of such a process that the causes and effects in question should be independently identifiable: yet Schopenhauer would certainly, I think, have claimed that in a case like that (for instance) of seeing a table, it is impossible to attend separately to the visual sensation from which the actual perception of the table is alleged to be derived. The case cannot therefore be parallel to situations of the normal kind where we might be said to conclude from sensations to their probable causes, as when I judge that the sharp pain I suddenly feel in my hand is due to a wasp's having stung me. Hence it may be argued that, even if we allow that perceptual experience would not be possible without the occurrence of 'sensations' or 'sense-impressions' in *some* sense of these elusive terms, Schopenhauer's own account of their role in perception is obscure, to say the least.

Another difficulty to which Schopenhauer's theory might be held to give rise is that it leads one to think of the material or 'real' world as set behind a screen or barrier of sense-impressions; we do not directly perceive physical objects, but only their effects upon us, from which we infer their existence and nature. But if this is his view, what distinguishes it from 'representative' or 'causal' theories of the kind which in the writings of other philosophers he condemned as wrong or unintelligible? Now it is certainly clear that, whatever his words may sometimes suggest to the contrary, Schopenhauer in the main wished to claim that in some perfectly straightforward sense we are *directly* aware of material objects: it is as perceivable, not unperceivable, causes of our sensations that we are acquainted with physical things. How then did he suppose this to be the case? A possible clue lies perhaps in the fact that he

1. See *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, pp. 273–5.

almost invariably speaks of the understanding as 'constructing' rather than as 'inferring' causes from the sensations with which it is presented, tending to employ creative analogies in order to illustrate its function of transforming sensory experience into our normal awareness of an external corporeal world; the understanding, for instance, is compared to a 'constructive artist' and the senses to 'underworkers who hand it the materials' (*FR* §21). Thus what we empirically perceive is a kind of joint product of sensation and understanding, and no more than this; there is no non-empirical residue of counterpart objects to which our perceptions indirectly refer. It may nevertheless still be asked how perceptual objects can at one and the same time be regarded as produced by our minds operating in a certain way upon the data of sensation, and as causing or giving rise to those data; and it is hard to see how Schopenhauer could have satisfactorily answered this question. In his anxiety to prove, on the one hand, that empirical reality can be exhaustively characterized in terms of what is presented to a conscious subject through sense and intellect, and, on the other, that the principle of sufficient reason in its causal form enters essentially into the process whereby we become aware of that reality, he arrives at a position which (at any rate in the form in which he states it) seems altogether untenable.

Even so, and despite its many puzzling features, Schopenhauer's approach is not devoid of all merits. He tried, for example, to preserve (although admittedly within the framework of an inappropriate genetic theory) a sharp distinction between the notions of *sensation* and *perception*. In doing so he was departing from the standpoint of a long line of philosophers and psychologists, stretching through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to writers like James Mill and Bain in the nineteenth, all of whom attempted in one way or another to assimilate perception to the having of sensations; and his divergence from this well-established tradition was surely understandable. For at some stage all such assimilations seem to run into difficulties partly connected with the quite different roles the notions in question play in shaping our thought about, and attitudes towards, experience – differences which find ex-

pression over the whole range of our language. It was with such considerations in mind that Schopenhauer argued that whereas when speaking of sensation our attention was primarily directed towards *ourselves*, when we spoke in perceptual terms our concern was with what 'lies outside us'. 'Nothing objective,' he wrote, 'can ever lie in any sensation' (*FR* §21); while remaining the sole source of our knowledge of what goes on in the objective world of things and events, sensation in itself can never be other than private, 'subjective', a matter of states experienced in the bodily organism. In perception, on the other hand, our interests and dealings are with the complex sphere of external things. Hence the possession of highly developed interpretative and discriminatory powers is built into the very notion of perceptual consciousness, together with the ability to use and apply lessons derived from past experience; it is partly because of this that Schopenhauer stresses its 'intellectual' character. The mere fact of his having drawn such a contrast between perception and sensation does not, of course, provide us with any reason for accepting his own somewhat bizarre perceptual theory; moreover, an adequate exhibition of the contrast would involve examining a host of questions he does not even mention – questions concerning such things as the use of certain crucial sensory concepts, the ways in which different types of perceptual assertion are established or disputed, and so forth. Yet however bald his formulation of the distinction may have been, in insisting upon it he at least showed some recognition of a point whose importance has not always been sufficiently appreciated.

Thinking and Experience

The outlines of Schopenhauer's conception of our ordinary knowledge of the world have now been traced. Broadly speaking, the picture is this. Our awareness of empirical reality consists in the apprehension of ideas or representations, these having as their basis the data provided by the senses and being structured in accordance with the universal framework imposed by the perceiving subject. Under these conditions reality must appear not as a 'seamless whole' but as differentiated into

a multiplicity of individual phenomena; furthermore, since phenomenally speaking we are ourselves 'objects among objects', we are subject as observers to the *principium individuationis* and therefore confined to specific spatio-temporal positions and standpoints. It follows that all awareness of the phenomenal world is necessarily fragmentary and partial in character; no complete all-embracing comprehension of reality, such as metaphysicians have typically interested themselves in, can be sought at this level. Instead, the pattern of understanding we employ consists in relating and connecting together the separate and individual elements of experience in the ways prescribed by the principle of sufficient reason in its different forms. Thus Schopenhauer writes of the 'total and thorough relativity of the world as idea', and claims that here 'the sole endeavour of knowledge . . . will be to find out concerning objects just those relations laid down by the principle of sufficient reason, and so to trace their multifarious connexions in space, time and causality' (I, p. 229). This must be so, for, considered apart from the system of spatio-temporal and causal relations referred to, the notion of an object is seen to be without meaning, empty: 'if all these relations were taken away, the objects would also have disappeared for knowledge' (ibid.).

All the same, the whole of the story has not yet been told. There remains a crucially important aspect of our ordinary knowledge which has still to be considered. We are not merely perceiving beings: we also, Schopenhauer claims, wish to store up and systematize for future use the facts of which perception makes us aware, and to communicate them to others. And this involves an examination of 'abstract' or discursive thinking, where the principle of sufficient reason has a further distinctive role to play. What Schopenhauer says on this topic is best approached by first considering his view of the relation of thought to empirical reality.

Schopenhauer laid great emphasis upon the need to be clear about this relation, many of the errors and misconceptions of dogmatic metaphysics having sprung from a failure to understand it. Neither thinking nor the linguistic forms in which it

finds natural expression can be characterized without recognizing their necessary dependence upon what is given in sense-experience. Thinking may indeed aptly be called 'reflection' (*Reflexion*), in that it is essentially the 'copy (*Nachbildung*) or repetition of the originally presented world of perception, although it is a special kind of copy in an entirely different material' (I, p. 52); the optical analogy is appropriate precisely because it brings out the 'derivative and secondary character' of what is involved here (*FR* §27). Thinking, thus regarded as reflecting or copying the empirical world, makes use of a particular 'class of ideas', which we must be careful to distinguish from the 'ideas of perception' previously discussed. For the ideas we are now concerned with are abstract *concepts*, and it is nonsensical to talk of observing or witnessing a concept; it cannot be 'brought before the eyes or the imagination like objects of perception' (I, p. 50). It is of course true that thought and language are intimately related, and one can certainly regard the units of speech in which concepts and judgements are expressed as perceivable; for instance, we hear the words people utter, we see the sentences they put down on paper, and so on. This, however, is not the same as knowing or grasping what the visible and audible signs mean. Nor is it possible, though it is tempting, to interpret concepts as mental images for which the words we use stand. 'When someone speaks, do we at once translate his words into pictures of the imagination, which instantaneously flash upon us, arrange and link themselves together and assume form and colour, according to the words that are poured forth and their grammatical inflexions? What a tumult there would be in our heads while we listened to a speech or read a book!' (I, p. 51). This suggestion is too implausible and must be rejected; in an early note[1] Schopenhauer considers that the process of thinking 'in the strictest sense' is more reasonably compared with an algebra – 'we know the mutual relations of the concepts, and hence can throw them to and fro in all sorts of new combinations, without it being necessary for us to convert them in the process into mental images of the objects which they represent.' In any

1. *Erstlingsmanuskripte*, §34.

case, there are other grounds for dismissing the view that concepts can be equated with particular images. Concepts are essentially *general*, in that 'different things can be thought through the same concept': we use the concept *dog*, for example, to refer to numberless individual animals of dissimilar shapes, sizes, breeds, and so on, but we can only conjure up in imagination images of particular dogs, not an image of 'dog in general' (*FR* §28). The true utility of mental images, on the other hand, consists in the fact that as 'representatives of concepts' they can be employed to *illustrate* the type of empirical phenomenon to which the concept in question refers, thereby functioning as a sort of touchstone by means of which we can assure ourselves what it is that we are thinking about, or (indeed) that we are thinking of anything at all. And this is of the first importance. For ultimately all significant thinking must be susceptible of interpretation in terms of experience, and so *a fortiori* must the concepts which furnish thinking with its material. In one way our intellect is 'like a bank, which, if it is to be sound, must have cash in its safe so as to be able to meet all the notes it has issued in case of demand' (II, p. 244). If we are unable to explain, in the manner described, what we mean by certain expressions we use, merely elucidating them by reference to other abstract concepts which likewise stand in need of explanation, what we say will resemble 'a bank-note issued by a firm which has nothing but other paper obligations to back it with' (*FR* §28): this (Schopenhauer holds) is the trouble with many of the assertions commonly met with in philosophical literature, there being no possibility of 'verifying by perceptions' the mysterious entities to which reference is so confidently made. For, properly speaking, language forms a kind of hierarchical system, its terms and the concepts they embody or express belonging to different levels or strata of abstraction. It can be said, for example, of notions like *virtue* or *beginning* that they occupy positions on a higher level of abstraction than that on which other conceptions such as *man*, *stone*, or *horse* are situated; it would not indeed be inappropriate to call 'the latter the ground floor and the former the upper storeys of the building of reflection' (I, p. 53). For in the end it has to be

recognized that all higher-level descriptive concepts rest upon and must be interpretable in terms of those at ground level, the latter having as their basis the ideas or representations of direct experience.

Generally speaking Schopenhauer (like some other philosophers – Berkeley and Bergson, for instance) was suspicious of language, and deeply conscious of what he believed to be its essential limitations. Not merely is it liable to be employed to make statements which on analysis prove to be confused and even devoid of significance; it also tends to confine us within certain rigid forms of expression which act like 'fetters' on our minds, limiting our vision and narrowly restricting our powers of discrimination and response. For this reason he stresses the importance of learning foreign (and especially ancient) languages, since familiarity with the different modes of expression these embody helps to liberate us from the bondage to which our own language so firmly holds us; a suggestion that recalls Nietzsche's claim that philosophers accustomed to languages of widely divergent structures from our own are likely to look differently 'into the world' and to be found on radically different paths of thought. Even so, there remain ineradicable limitations to which all language is by its very nature subject. The original function of language is, Schopenhauer maintains, essentially practical. It provides us with a handy way of memorizing, handling, and organizing the data with which experience provides us, giving us the means of putting our empirical findings to use and of making others aware of them; without it all science would be impossible. But in order to fulfil these roles it must also, in the interests of generality and communicability, leave out what is from a practical standpoint unnecessary: it must inevitably abstract from the inexhaustible richness and variety of lived experience in its particularity and detail; it must cut across the infinitely subtle similarities and differences which are to be found among phenomena. Thus words and concepts are inevitably crude instruments: 'however finely we may divide them by tighter definition, they are still incapable of reaching the fine modifications of the perceptible' (I, p. 74), and from this point of view they can be compared with the

stones of a mosaic, the edges of which preclude the possibility of a continuous passage from one colour to another. As an illustration, Schopenhauer mentions the way in which we are often conscious of the impossibility of putting into words the expression on a person's face; 'the meaning of the features' seems to elude all precise or adequate description, despite our being in no doubt that we 'feel' and understand it well enough and can respond to it with perfect appropriateness. Nor are these the only respects in which we are constantly being reminded of the limitations of conceptual thought and knowledge, even in the context of ordinary life. For take the difficulties we may experience in saying exactly how it is that we manage to *do* certain things, when we wish (for instance) to give others instruction in their performance. It is quite wrong to imagine that, where what is done requires skill or dexterity, such actions must necessarily be preceded by acts of theoretical or rational reflection; it may indeed be just not possible always to formulate with accuracy the ways in which we carry out a learned activity or exemplify our knowledge of some practical technique. One has only to consider carefully what is involved in playing games needing quickness of eye or judgement, or in operations like tuning a musical instrument, or even in such a common-or-garden action as shaving, to appreciate the problems presented by this kind of knowledge: as Schopenhauer puts it, 'it is no use to me to be able to say in the abstract the exact angle . . . at which I must apply the razor, if I do not know it intuitively' (I, p. 73). For it is, in fact, precisely an 'intuitive', i.e. unreflective, knowledge that guides a person in cases like these – a direct understanding or grasp of what to do, how to handle things, which is not mediated by any prior thinking or calculations made in advance.

Schopenhauer seems at least to have been entirely right in suggesting that there is a considerable danger of overestimating the part ratiocination is capable of playing in the performance of a wide range of human activities; an error into which philosophers, being occupationally disposed to stress theoretical and intellectual processes, are perhaps especially prone to fall. As we shall discover later, he also thought that

this tendency had produced particularly disastrous results in the philosophical interpretation of artistic creation, and likewise in that of moral experience and conduct: so far as art is concerned 'the concept is always unfruitful', while in ethics it has to be recognized that in the last analysis 'virtue and holiness do not proceed from reflection but from the inner depths of the will' (I, p. 75). Generally speaking, Schopenhauer holds that 'reason' is always and necessarily unproductive, uncreative; that this is so, he thinks, follows from the account he has given of concepts and judgements as simply 'reflecting' or reproducing what we are originally aware of through direct perception and experience. Hence reason is 'feminine in nature'; it can 'only give after it has received' and cannot 'supply material content from its own resources'. Provided certain propositions are experientially known to be true, others can be formally derived from them by reason alone; there is, however, nothing especially mysterious about this process. For it amounts to no more than the manipulation and transformation of concepts and propositions in accordance with rules that are crystallized in the principles of formal logic; and 'through purely logical reasoning . . . we shall never obtain more than an elucidation and exposition of what lies already complete in the premisses; thus we shall only *explicitly* expound what was already *implicitly* understood' (I, p. 86). In other words the validity of 'rational' or deductive inference is relative to the conceptual instruments and systems human beings fashion and employ for their specific purposes. If one were looking for analogies, one might regard the function Schopenhauer here assigns to 'reason' as being in some respects like that of a computing machine; it can only operate upon data fed in from outside, and its mode of operation is throughout determined by rules accepted in advance and 'built into' its mechanism. Nor is there anything particularly puzzling in the question of how we come to accept the rules that we do. When he came to discuss the status of formal logic itself, Schopenhauer was of course solely concerned with the 'classical' logic presented in the textbooks of his time: he could not have been expected to anticipate the vast changes which have since overtaken the

subject with the development of formalized systems; for him, arguments of the syllogistic form still represented the paradigm of logical inference. It would, he held, obviously be absurd to suppose that the rules governing such arguments have been invented by logicians out of their own heads; on the other hand, it would be equally mistaken to imagine that they have been arrived at or confirmed through observation and experiment, as if they were laws of nature. Rather they constitute, in an abstract and schematic form, patterns of reasoning which in the ordinary way we apply to particular cases unreflectingly and without appealing to formulated canons of valid inference; they are really no more than a distillation from established practice as this is exhibited in the everyday use of language. Hence it must be misleading to speak as if we could ever learn anything *new* from the fundamental rules and principles laid out for us by logicians, since such principles already implicitly underlie our ordinary thinking and forms of discourse, and have in the first instance been derived from a consideration of those. Thus Schopenhauer claims that a child, in learning language with all its twists and turns of expression, acquires 'that really concrete logic' which consists, not in the ability to formulate rules of logic in the abstract, but in knowing immediately how to use and apply them. In learning to speak, we are *ipso facto* introduced to and made aware of the 'entire mechanism of reason'; it is in the acquisition of language and linguistic skills that we receive our true training in logic (*FR* §26), and not through memorizing the abstracts and schemas of logicians. For this reason anyone who studies textbook logic for practical purposes may be compared to one who would think it reasonable to 'teach a beaver to build its own dam' (I, p. 59). Even so, however devoid of practical usefulness the study of logic may be, it does not follow that it is without theoretical interest. Schopenhauer thinks that it defines and explicates in the clearest manner possible certain conditions requisite for thought as we understand it, conditions presupposed by all our forms of language and communication.

We are now in a position to appreciate the significance of Schopenhauer's account of what he refers to as 'the principle

of sufficient reason of knowing' (*principium rationis sufficientis cognoscendi*). He claims that in following this further specification of the general principle we are always led to seek the 'grounds' or 'reasons' upon which a given proposition or judgement rests; to consider this form of the principle is therefore to be committed to an examination of notions like *truth*, *justification*, and *proof*. The sense, however, in which a proposition can be said to be true, or again the sense in which it can be said to be established or proved, varies markedly according to the kind of proposition it is and the circumstances under which it is made. For example, we can say of a judgement that it is *logically* true, or (in Kantian terminology) that it is 'analytic'; the truth of such a judgement is ultimately based upon a law of logic like the so-called 'principle of identity' – 'A is equal to A' – which it can be shown to exemplify through the analysis of the concepts its embodies. On the other hand, to call a judgement *empirically* true is to imply that its truth does not rest upon a truism of this kind, but instead upon the verifiable facts of sense-experience. All our ordinary descriptive judgements about the world, together with the various hypotheses and laws used in the scientific explanation and prediction of phenomenal occurrences, are subject to this type of test; contrary to certain popular beliefs, no hypothesis in the natural sciences could be demonstrable in a purely logical sense – this would be like saying that a building could stand in the air (I, p. 85). Schopenhauer does not, however, deny that demonstrative or deductive reasoning plays a central part in the construction and confirmation of scientific theories, in the sense, for instance, that it is through drawing out the logical consequences of such theories that the scientist is able to put them to inductive test. Nor does he deny that an empirical proposition may be shown to be true by reference to other true propositions from which it may be logically derived. One way in which I may be led to agree to a statement to which I am at first reluctant to assent is by being shown that it is a logical consequence of other statements whose truth I do not question; it was with this in mind that Schopenhauer was prepared to speak of some factual or 'material' judgements as affording the grounds of

other judgements to which they stand as premisses to conclusions. He insists, nevertheless, that we must never fail to distinguish between inferences of this sort, the validity of which depends upon our conceptual system and the logical principles underlying its employment, and causal or mathematical ones which rest upon different foundations; the validity of a causal inference depends upon empirically ascertainable relations between phenomena, that of a mathematical one upon the *a priori* intuition of spatial or temporal relations. Logical necessity cannot be equated with either physical or mathematical necessity (*FR* §49): to forget this is to fall into confusions of the type already illustrated by the previous discussion of the false identification of the concepts of *reason* and *cause*.

All these considerations throw into sharper relief the criticisms levelled earlier against the assumption that the metaphysician can probe the secrets of transcendent reality by means of abstract thought and deductive reasoning alone. According to Schopenhauer, discursive thinking and language have to be considered, first and foremost, in relation to human experience and human needs. Thinking 'reflects' experience and is parasitic upon it. Concepts and propositions can be elucidated up to a point by tracing their connexions with other concepts and judgements, and by providing equivalences and definitions; in the end, though, we must break out of the circle if we are not to forfeit the right to claim that what we say is informative, has factual content. An appreciation of the role speech plays in human life and behaviour helps to make this clear. Thought and language are not isolable phenomena existing in a kind of vacuum, but need to be seen in terms of their primary and original function of enabling men to cope with and act effectively upon a presented environment of perceptible things; upon our ability to think and talk, absent in other forms of life, depend our highly developed capacities to satisfy our complex wants and desires. Concepts are in fact essentially adapted to practical ends; any philosophy that overlooks this will be bound at some stage to misrepresent and distort the relation between thinking and reality. Thus when he is discussing thought and language, as when he is discussing our percep-

tual awareness of the phenomenal world, Schopenhauer gives prime emphasis to the pragmatic factors which in his view determine the characteristic features of ordinary knowledge. On the level of perception, our consciousness of phenomena under the forms of space, time, and causality reflects our nature as active beings, creatures of 'will'; 'for only through these is the object *interesting* to the individual, i.e. related to the will' (I, p. 229). And likewise when it is a question of the nature of conceptual thinking, and particularly its role in scientific inquiry, we must never lose sight of its practical orientation, the ways in which it contributes towards satisfying the needs and appetites of men as agents in the world. Taken together, these points are integral to Schopenhauer's doctrine of the intellect's being the 'servant of the will', which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Many of Schopenhauer's remarks on the subject of thought and language were, I think, acute and penetrating, especially when regarded from the point of view of the historical context in which he was writing; they often seem to be suggestive of ideas which have only in more recent times achieved wide currency. In other respects, however, what he said is less satisfactory and raises problems. It is not, for instance, really clear what he envisaged the relation between concepts and words to be: although he certainly implied that concepts and verbal expression stand in the closest connexion, there is more than an indication that he thought that the former could be understood as having an independent existence, words being merely their outward 'clothing' and their own status consequently remaining somewhat obscure. Nor is the notion of thought, and hence speech, as reflecting or copying phenomenal reality without difficulties, plausible though it might at first sight appear. A view in some ways comparable to that of Schopenhauer, although enormously different in the manner in which it is formulated and developed, underlies the characterization of propositions put forward by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, a view which he rejected in his later writings. Leaving aside, however, the particular question of how Wittgenstein's original theory of language should be understood or criticized (and it

is easy to misrepresent him here), it is often argued that in general pictorial conceptions of meaning are liable to offer an over-simplified and ultimately misleading model of the structure and functionings of language as it is actually used and understood. Not merely do they focus attention exclusively upon the descriptive and fact-stating functions of speech, to the neglect of the immense variety of other purposes for which it may be employed: it may also be claimed that the very notion of propositions, and of the concepts or terms combined within them, as in some sense 'picturing' or 'representing' elements in the world in the proposed manner can quickly be seen to raise a host of further problems. What, for example, is to be said about universal or about conditional statements? Again, is it possible to speak of there being a 'natural' resemblance between a proposition or a concept and that which it is used to describe or refer to – such as exists between (say) reflections and objects mirrored, or between portraits and sitters? And if not, does this not put in doubt the legitimacy of treating linguistic expressions as exhibiting reality after the fashion of pictures or copies, such a comparison obscuring the vital role played by the observance of conventions in the application and understanding of language?

Schopenhauer might perhaps be defended against such objections on the grounds that he would not have wished his suggestion to be taken so literally. His comparison, it might be claimed, should be interpreted as having the more limited aim of drawing attention to *certain* analogies between thinking and talking on the one hand, and pictorial or imitative forms of representation on the other. Thus it is surely undeniable that we often use pictures to convey information where we could instead have used language; likewise, it is possible to speak of 'depicting' a scene or situation linguistically where the same result could have been attained by drawing a sketch or plan or diagram. Moreover, the senses in which propositions are true or false, and concepts applicable or inapplicable, have analogues of a kind in our references to pictures and maps as accurate or inaccurate, correct or incorrect, and of copies as being like or unlike their originals. But, be this as it may, there

are nevertheless reasons for holding that Schopenhauer's distinction between what he called 'ideas of reflection' and 'ideas of perception' respectively is open to criticism from another standpoint, in that it leads him to divide his treatment of conceptual thinking too sharply from the account he provides of the conditions governing our perceptual knowledge of an objective world. It will be remembered that when considering Kant's apparatus of categories he laid great stress on the point that Kant fatally confused distinct aspects of cognition: perceiving with conceiving, direct sensory awareness of things with thought or reflection about them, the 'intuitive' with the 'abstract'. Could it not, though, be objected in return that Schopenhauer's own clear-cut separation between the functions of 'sensibility' and 'understanding' on one side, and those of 'reason' on the other, is itself in some ways artificial and misleading? Is it clear that the framework of relations, in terms of which our experience has been said to be ordered and arranged, can be adequately characterized without taking some account of the manner in which it enters into our forms of thought and speech? Schopenhauer sometimes writes as if the 'world of perception' could be regarded as a fixed and finished whole, with our fully-articulated consciousness of space, time, and causality built into it at a pre-conceptual level; the system of concepts and language is then portrayed as being designed to fit and mirror this already existing structure. But the role of space, time, and causality in forming the general scheme in which our knowledge of the world is set cannot (it may be argued) be fully explained without reference to our modes of exhibiting spatio-temporal and causal relations conceptually; we cannot so easily separate off the ways in which we think and talk about these relations from our awareness and recognition of them; our knowledge and our modes of expression are here largely bound up with one another. To what extent, for instance, is it legitimate to speak of 'knowledge of causality' in the sense Schopenhauer has in mind, without some grasp of the use of causal terminology being presupposed? Yet he is apparently prepared to ascribe such 'knowledge' to animals who lack the capacity for abstract thinking, and anyway

always treats it as essentially belonging to the 'understanding', whose functions are explicitly contrasted with those of conceptualizing 'reason'. In the light of the findings both of recent child psychology and of modern investigation of animal behaviour, however, it might be unwise to press the implications of such criticisms too far. And in any case it would not be right to think that he was altogether unaware of the extent to which the question of how we 'view' the world is, in an important sense, a question of how we describe it. Despite the bearing of some of his remarks in other contexts, much that he says when immediately concerned with the relations of space, time, and causality to the interpretation of experience seems to make this amply clear.

Motivation

Finally, before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to refer briefly to a topic the full discussion of which really belongs elsewhere. In addition to the three forms already mentioned, there is, according to Schopenhauer, yet a fourth form of the principle of sufficient reason; namely, the *principium rationis sufficientis agendi*, or 'law of motivation'. This specification of the principle underlies all explanation of human action at the phenomenal level, the notion of an action which does not follow from some motive being inconceivable to us. In one way it may, no doubt, be considered as no more than a special case of the more general 'law of causality' previously considered, since motives 'belong to causes' and must be 'numbered and characterized' under this head (*FR* §43). At the same time, though, it has certain unique features which justify its being accorded an independent status. We noticed earlier, for instance, that Schopenhauer holds motivation to be not wholly assimilable to other kinds of causal concept, e.g. those typically used in the physical sciences. For an essential condition of the operation of motives, absent in the case of inorganic things or (for that matter) of relatively primitive organic or living phenomena, is perceptual cognition; only a being capable of perception is susceptible to motives, and therefore 'movement induced by motives is necessarily wanting where there is no

cognitive faculty' (ibid. §20). In other words, if something is to act as a motive upon somebody he must be aware of it; and Schopenhauer, in a way that does not conform very closely with our customary usage of the term, as a rule restricts it to mean either some present perception of an object or state of affairs which has the property of inclining us to behave in a certain way, or else the prospect of such an object or state of affairs, this prospect being entertained in thought or imagination. Animals, since they are capable of perception, are susceptible to motives in the first sense; but only human beings, having the capacity for 'reflection' as well, can be motivated in the second sense. Schopenhauer also claims, as a further distinguishing characteristic of motives, that it is only with them, unlike other types of cause, that we can be conscious of their action 'from the inside': motives are causes 'seen from within', because when moved to do something each of us is in his own case aware of the motives as touching his inner will, which expresses itself in the phenomenal movements of his body. Thus the consideration of motives leads naturally on to the next stage of Schopenhauer's system, his examination of the world as will. Only when seen in the context of that examination do the implications of his treatment of motivation become fully manifest.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Essence of the World

SOMEWHERE in nearly every speculative system of philosophy one can locate a nuclear or germinal idea which may be said to represent its heart; this idea is the source of the life and vitality of the whole. Less figuratively speaking, it is from such a dominant conception, or *idée maîtresse*, that all the characteristic features and tenets of the system draw their significance and in the end their interest. It is in terms of such a conception, too, that the value and importance of a philosophical system of the kind in question may finally be assessed: bad ideas as well as good ones, absurd or infantile notions as much as notions which fascinate the intellect or strike deeply at the imagination or the emotions, have proved capable of inspiring the creation of elaborate theoretical structures. In Schopenhauer's case the focal point and centre around which the rest of his theory is arranged is to be found in his concept of the will. This forms the meeting-place of beliefs that are integral to the whole of his thought about the world and experience; at the same time it can, I think, be shown to comprehend the most distinctive elements in his contribution to philosophy and to speculation in general. Implicit within it are not only many of the ideas which underlie his theory of knowledge and the development of his metaphysics; to this concept also his views on natural science, his moral and aesthetic conceptions, and – by no means least important – his theory of human nature, must all in the end be traced back.

Philosophy and Natural Science

In Chapter Two Schopenhauer's doctrine of the will was approached from the direction of his appraisal and critique of Kantian Idealism. I had particularly in view his preoccupation with the problem of giving an account of the world which, while not being subject to the strictures Kant had passed upon

'transcendent' metaphysics, would nevertheless succeed in providing answers to questions which seem to be beyond the scope of ordinary empirical inquiry. We have seen how in his examination of our knowledge of the world 'as idea' Schopenhauer rejected the supposition that the undertaking upon which he was engaged could be considered in any sense to be a scientific undertaking; for there he was dealing with the *forms* of our cognition of phenomena, and since these forms are presupposed in all scientific inquiry, it cannot fall within the province of science to explore and investigate their nature. But the irrelevance of scientific methods of investigation is something upon which Schopenhauer insists with equal force when the question is one of determining the fundamental character, not of our customary modes of perception and knowledge of the world, but of the world in its innermost nature. From the point of view he had adopted he was of course bound to do this. For in his discussion of the world 'as will' he was concerned to characterize it as it 'really' is, and not merely as it appears to us in perception. But since he had already argued that all scientific reasoning and theorizing proceeded in conformity with the principle of sufficient reason, the application of that principle being limited exclusively to the phenomenal sphere, it followed directly that the employment of scientific procedures could have no place in what he was now trying to accomplish.

Perhaps no philosopher has felt more keenly than Schopenhauer the sense of dissatisfaction sometimes experienced concerning the adequacy of scientific explanation, a dissatisfaction which Wittgenstein seems to have had in mind when he wrote: 'We feel that even when all *possible* scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all.'[1] Such an attitude finds expression, although in widely different ways, in a great deal of nineteenth-century speculative writing, at times assuming the form of an actual hostility to natural science that sharply divides it in spirit and tone from metaphysical thinking typical of the previous two centuries. The motives and reasons for this change of attitude were

1. *Tractatus*, 6.52.

various, not all of them being particularly reputable or deserving of respect. It is tempting, for instance, to put down the aggressive antagonism displayed by certain writers to ignorance and misunderstanding of what scientific investigators were trying to do and of the nature of their procedure and results; the intense dislike of science sometimes apparent in their work may even have partially sprung from an awareness of this lack of comprehension and from the vague sense of unease and irritation that accompanied it. None the less, more powerful forces were also at work. In the first place, it was popularly believed throughout the nineteenth century, and especially in its latter half when Darwinian theory upset many cherished views about man's position in the cosmos, that scientific advances constituted a definite threat to religious beliefs, and that previous arguments to prove the ultimate compatibility of scientific discoveries with religious doctrine could no longer be accepted. Any philosophical system, therefore, which appeared to curtail the pretensions of science by setting limits to the scope and validity of scientific methods of inquiry could expect to receive a welcome from those to whom the supposed conflict between science and religion was a source of disquiet; and it is almost a commonplace in the history of ideas that where a strong need of this kind is felt it tends in one form or another to be satisfied. Secondly, and for present purposes more relevantly, the tendency to be critical of the claims of natural science gained much of its impetus from ideas associated with the Romantic movement. By the opening of the century these had already begun to exercise a revolutionary influence in a number of areas of thought; current conceptions of self-consciousness and inner experience, of artistic activity and awareness, and of history and the pattern of human development, were questioned at a very deep level, and fresh ways of interpreting the phenomena concerned were proposed. In the light of such ideas, it appeared no longer possible to accept a range of assumptions regarding the proper study of human nature and human life, assumptions which had been largely suggested by achievements in the physical sciences and which had come to acquire an almost axiomatic status in the eyes of

some Enlightenment thinkers. Consequently, much subsequent philosophical work can be considered as representing an attempt to forge and put into currency new instruments for describing and rendering intelligible aspects of behaviour and consciousness for which the previous scientifically-inspired and 'mechanistic' models of explanation were felt to be at best insufficient and at worst totally inappropriate. And, corresponding to this movement, part of the task of metaphysical thinking was conceived to be one, not of somehow justifying the universal application of such models, but on the contrary of making clear the limitations governing their legitimate use.

What was Schopenhauer's position with regard to such developments? How far can his own attitude towards scientific thought be said to reflect them? Of one thing we can by now be sure, namely, that quite apart from his views on the philosophical propriety of such an enterprise, he felt no desire whatever to come to the rescue of established religion and its dogmas. His relation, on the other hand, to some of the philosophical ideas which emerged in connexion with the Romantic mode of thought is more complex than his own bitter denunciations of his compatriots would suggest. It is true that he rejected violently many of the cardinal doctrines he attributed to Fichte, Hegel, and their successors. He would for instance have nothing to do with the Hegelian picture of reality as representing in its essence the unfolding of fundamental logical categories: this appeared to him to involve fallacies basically similar to those singled out by Kant when criticizing earlier metaphysical theories. Again, he displayed only scorn for the historically-oriented aspects of the Hegelian system; for example, the emphasis Hegelians apparently laid upon ordered change and development, their tendency to treat 'the history of the world as a planned whole, or, as they call it, "to construe it organically"' and their preparedness to regard 'the philosophy of history as . . . the chief end of all philosophy' (III, pp. 224–5). For Schopenhauer, the stress on the 'historical consciousness' to be found in Hegelian writings, with its implication, not merely that the world itself is inherently subject to 'dialectical' movement, but further that the categories and standards of

validity by reference to which men think about and interpret their experience vary from age to age, was misguided: it is not the world as it really is, but only the world as it presents itself to us as idea, that is constantly shifting and changing, and then only in particulars and in detail, never 'as a whole'; moreover, the universal forms under which it presents itself to us remain at bottom stable and unalterable, constituting the unchanging conditions of ordinary human knowledge. Yet while repudiating so much of what he took to be the positive doctrine propounded by his contemporaries in Germany, it is also true that Schopenhauer shared with them a profoundly critical attitude towards the assumptions of some of their eighteenth-century predecessors, and especially towards those that concerned the structure of the human mind and personality. It seemed to him entirely mistaken to imagine that it is possible to provide an adequate and exhaustive account of ourselves and our mental processes in a 'scientific' manner; that is to say, in a fashion which implies that psychical phenomena may be analysed into the equivalents of Newtonian particles and which would reduce them in every case to discrete 'atomic' ideas or sensations, these being thought of as subject to invariant quasi-mechanical principles of association and combination whose operations could be brought to light through patient inspection and introspective observation. It might, of course, be pointed out that it is one thing to deny that the psyche and its workings can be properly interpreted according to a particular mechanistic model; it is another to suggest that *any* form of scientific investigation of our psychological constitution must inevitably lead to results that are either false or – at the best – superficial and misleading. Schopenhauer, however, did not clearly distinguish between these claims; when he speaks of 'empirical psychology' it is always with the implication that it can only touch the surface of things, never plumb the depths of the soul. And in any case he thought it to be a palpable matter of historical fact that previous blind faith in the universal applicability of scientific notions and procedures had given rise to disastrously artificial conceptions of our common nature. Science, in other words, had shown itself to

be utterly unable to do justice to the facts of our own inner being; and I do not think that Schopenhauer's approach to scientific inquiry in general can be finally understood without reference to his conviction that it had manifestly failed in a domain that is of the deepest concern to us and must necessarily take precedence over any other.

To say this is, however, only to draw attention to a pervasive element in Schopenhauer's thinking which (as I shall try to show later) has some bearing upon his ultimate conception of the will and upon the place assigned to it in his system. The immediate considerations to which he appeals in his discussion of the shortcomings of scientific knowledge are of a different kind, and chiefly centre on the concepts of explanation and intelligibility.

The Limits of Scientific Understanding

Schopenhauer begins by asking us to consider what is really accomplished by explanations of facts and events of the type the scientist provides. The various sciences can roughly be divided under two main heads. Under the first are comprised what he calls the *morphological* sciences – 'what is generally termed natural history'. Such sciences are concerned with the classification and arrangement of particular types of natural phenomena, these types being distinguished through the collection of instances and the careful observation and comparison of their characteristics or habits; he cites botany and zoology as branches of inquiry which have developed elaborate classificatory schemes of the sort in question, wherein the phenomena studied can be placed and ordered. The 'morphological' sciences are, however, in no way explanatory, and must be distinguished on this account from those that may be called by contrast *aetiological*. For in the latter attempts are made towards understanding, as opposed to merely categorizing and organizing, phenomena; mechanics, physics, chemistry, and physiology all belong to the aetiological group, and the question therefore arises concerning the sense in which such sciences can be said to explain the features of the world with which they respectively deal.

In conformity with his discussion of the principle of sufficient reason, Schopenhauer treats scientific explanation as being essentially causal in character. It shows 'how, according to an invariable rule . . . one change necessarily conditions and brings about a certain other change' (I, p. 125), and thereby exhibits the 'orderly arrangement' in which phenomenal occurrences take place, the discovery of the regularities governing events in the perceptible world always being itself a purely empirical matter. What Schopenhauer says on this topic can be regarded as approximately conforming to a familiar analysis of causal explanation which has found favour among some recent philosophers: on that analysis, to explain an event in the relevant (causal) sense consists in showing the statement descriptive of the event in question to be deducible from a set of statements descriptive of various other events (sometimes called the 'initial' or 'boundary' conditions) together with certain general statements or laws. To those who have in one form or another adopted such an account, one of its most attractive features has lain in its not requiring the postulation of a special nexus between the cause (or causes) and the effect; the connexion asserted to hold is to be elucidated wholly in terms of *de facto* universal correlations between phenomena, such correlations being subject to empirical methods of confirmation and check. Nevertheless, Schopenhauer's use of this model to interpret explanations in the sciences led him to draw conclusions which – it is safe to say – would not be palatable to most modern upholders of the analysis under consideration. For he argues that if this analysis is right, and if scientific explanation is thereby revealed to be no more than a matter of correlating observable happenings with other happenings and states of affairs discovered by experience invariably to accompany them, what the sciences achieve within their different spheres can only leave us profoundly dissatisfied. To be told that events take place in determinate sequences, that there are universal rules governing the circumstances and conditions under which certain phenomena can be expected to occur, is no doubt from one point of view extremely useful, for such knowledge is of value in making possible the attainment of a variety of practical pur-

poses and aims. But is this enough? Is it not rather as if we were looking at the section of a slab of marble 'which shows many veins beside each other, but does not allow us to know the course of the veins from the interior of the marble to its surface' (I, p. 127)? Alternatively, might one not compare the situation to that of a man brought into a gathering of people, each member of which introduces another to him as his friend or as his relative and in no other way, so that at the end of the process he is still left in bewilderment as to who the persons present really are or what his relation is to the company before him? In a similar way, Schopenhauer suggests that, for all the information the various sciences provide us with concerning the relations in which the various phenomena of sense-experience stand to one another, these phenomena still confront us as if they were metaphorically speaking 'strangers'; their true identity and significance has not been made plain or comprehended. To cite yet another simile Schopenhauer offers in this connexion, 'we are like a man who goes round a castle seeking in vain for an entrance, and sometimes sketching the façades' (I, p. 128).

What is to be said about these strange expressions of discontent? It might be contended, in the first place, that the difficulties Schopenhauer professes to find with scientific explanation, which he formulates in such figurative language, are partly due to his having adopted an altogether too simple-minded view of the general character of scientific interpretations of reality. These interpretations cannot be regarded as analysable into a host of statements referring to particular causal regularities, nor can it be reasonably maintained that the scientist's quest is directed solely towards the discovery of 'brute' concomitances between observable phenomena. What physicist, chemist, biologist (it might be asked) would accept the view that the object of his inquiries consisted solely in registering certain correlations observed to hold at the level of everyday experience? Such a view fails to take account of the fact that the scientific investigator regards his business to be one, not merely of describing, but also of rendering intelligible the way things happen in the world; at the same time, it fatally

overlooks the role played in the scientific enterprise by highly complex theories and hypotheses, formulated to account for and predict natural occurrences in a precise and systematic fashion. Schopenhauer was right to insist that theories and laws of the type the scientist provides must be open to empirical test, that they are in the end only accepted or rejected in the light of experiential evidence. But to admit this as being a central and indispensable feature of all scientific procedure is by no means to be committed to the opinion that the various sciences amount to no more than compilations of information concerning uniformities and regularities noticed to hold within particular fields of study; and it might be added that ideas displaying radical departures from accepted modes of thinking about and representing natural phenomena, and involving the introduction of interpretative models often in striking contrast with established ways of approaching experience, have in fact contributed to the development of immensely powerful explanatory hypotheses, with consequences ramifying over widely disparate areas of investigation. From this standpoint the claim that scientific knowledge and procedures are merely an extension and systematization of 'common sense' is seriously misleading: nor, once the inaccuracy of such conceptions is grasped and correct views substituted, is there any reason to agree that science fails to meet Schopenhauer's demand that our understanding of the world should be given 'cubical content' and that we should not be content merely to advance along the 'plane of surface appearances'.

Now it is, I think, true that Schopenhauer's knowledge of the detailed structure of contemporary theories in physics and chemistry was not very exact or profound, and that many of his assertions with regard to such theories exhibit misunderstandings. But all the same it would not be right to assume that he was ignorant in a general way of the state of scientific knowledge at his time; after all he had had some scientific education, and he possessed a wide if rather superficial acquaintance with what was going on, as is shown by – among other things – his numerous references to discoveries in the field of electrical phenomena and his allusions (admittedly somewhat disparaging) to Dalton's

atomic theory, put forward to explain certain laws of combination in chemistry. Likewise, he was not entirely unaware of the importance of the part played by high-level theoretical concepts in the formulation of scientific hypotheses: he thought, however, that he could give an account of these which was on the one hand in accordance with his general view of science as being ultimately concerned with the discernment of causal uniformities among observed phenomena, and which on the other was capable of highlighting the respects in which it must finally fail to satisfy us. Let us consider in more detail the nature of that account.

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It is worth pointing out, to begin with, that Schopenhauer was not alone in wishing to maintain that in the last analysis scientific knowledge can pertain only to 'observables'. Other philosophers, writing both before and after his time, have put forward *prima facie* similar views, claiming that scientific concepts and modes of representation can be interpreted in a manner that does not require us to suppose that anything is really being talked about apart from perceived facts and empirical regularities. One may mention, for example, the suggestions put forward by Berkeley at the beginning of the eighteenth century, or again the position of writers belonging to the nineteenth-century 'positivist' school – Auguste Comte, for instance, or (later on) the Austrian physicist and philosopher of science, Ernst Mach. Thus Berkeley, anxious at all times that terms and expressions should be related to particular 'ideas' of sense, characterized so-called natural laws as no more than 'rules . . . observed in the production of natural effects', and Mach denied that such laws could be spoken of as actually residing 'in nature' – only individual instances or 'cases' of laws did this, the laws themselves being more properly described as 'things of the thought'. Likewise, Mach questioned the propriety of treating the 'unobservables' apparently postulated in certain branches of physical theory as real existents in the world. When he was discussing atomic theory, for instance, he described atoms as merely representing 'a

mathematical *model* for facilitating the mental reproduction of the facts':[1] since they could not be 'perceived by the senses', it was impossible to accept the 'dogma' of their actual existence.

Between Schopenhauer's own account of science and views of this sort, which belong to a respectable philosophical tradition, analogies can certainly be found. They can be said to rest upon a theory of knowledge and meaning resembling the one he professed when he maintained that all concepts, however abstract, must be finally susceptible of interpretation in terms of experience. Again, they seem to presuppose a largely pragmatic conception of scientific truth, and such a conception was implicit in Schopenhauer's picture of scientific knowledge; for him the primary function of science lay in its making it possible to predict with accuracy the manner in which 'nature invariably proceeds whenever certain definite circumstances occur' – a law of nature being simply '*un fait généralisé*', a compendious or summary means of referring to an indefinite range of particular occurrences and their conditions – and to see it in this way was (he implied) to realize that it was essentially a matter of 'know-how', a system of techniques for the attainment of practical objectives. Could it also, however, be argued that science affords us with true *understanding* of the phenomena with which it deals? To that question he returned, as we have seen, a negative answer, and here again his opinions seem comparable at least to those of Berkeley, who also showed a reluctance to treat scientific accounts of the world as explanatory in the deepest sense. Nevertheless the position he adopted on this point was significantly different from Berkeley's: to see where they diverged, something must be said of Schopenhauer's doctrine of 'forces of nature'.

Schopenhauer claimed that all scientific explanations ultimately presuppose the operation of a variety of natural forces, the character and workings of which cannot themselves be scientifically known or explained; as examples of these he cited electricity, magnetism, and 'chemical properties and qualities of every kind' (I, p. 169). Such 'forces' must not be confused

1. E. Mach, *Science of Mechanics*, p. 590.

with causes in the proper sense: one should rather say that they *manifest themselves* in the various causal sequences and correlations the scientist observes to hold between phenomena. Thus, to take a simple case, it may be found that, when a piece of iron is treated in a certain way, bringing it into close proximity with another piece of iron has the effect of making the second piece of metal move towards it: in such a case we may speak of the operation of magnetism. But magnetism cannot be described as a *cause* of what happens; the language of 'cause and effect' is applicable only to the observed phenomenal data – to such things as the manner in which the first bit of metal was treated, the behaviour of the other piece of metal when placed near the first, and so on. Hence, while it is no doubt useful to refer to this particular sequence, together with innumerable others of a relevantly similar kind, as 'due to magnetism', since we are enabled thereby to comprehend under a single head a host of diverse phenomenal occurrences, we should not be misled into thinking that what we have here is itself a form of causal explanation: to think this would be radically to misconceive the character of natural forces, of which magnetism is one.

Now Berkeley also, when discussing the specific notion of *attractive force* and the role it played in physics, denied that such a force could properly be termed a productive or efficient cause, insisting that what was in question was no more than a 'mathematical hypothesis' and not 'anything really existing in nature'[1]; it was, so to speak, a theoretical device which facilitated inferences and inquiries concerning the behaviour of perceivable phenomena, and thus made possible what he described as 'a greater largeness of comprehension, whereby analogies, harmonies, and agreements are discovered in the works of nature, and the particular effects . . . reduced to general rules'.[2] But whereas for Berkeley notions like that of *force* in physics could be exhaustively characterized in these terms, for Schopenhauer such an interpretation could never be complete. He makes it absolutely clear that he will not allow the 'forces' of

1. G. Berkeley, *Siris*, §234.
2. *Principles of Human Knowledge*, §105.

which he speaks to be reducible without remainder to their phenomenal manifestations, or to be susceptible to a purely dispositional analysis according to which they merely refer compendiously to the kind of observable occurrences or changes that may be expected given the fulfilment of certain specifiable conditions. Instead, they represent the 'inner nature' of phenomena: though they find expression in spatio-temporal appearances, such appearances do not exhaust their reality; though they are presupposed by scientific investigation, such investigation can obtain no knowledge of them, only of their manifestations. They constitute, in other words, an ineliminable 'residue' in all scientific explanation, and from this point of view science must be admitted to strike everywhere against what it is unable to comprehend in its own terms, against the 'metaphysical'. 'Forces of nature' lie, in fact, beyond the reach of the principle of sufficient reason; they are something to which 'this form in itself is foreign', for it is a principle which 'only determines the appearance, not that which appears, only the how, not the what' (I, p. 158). To the objection that immediately springs to mind, namely that in postulating such non-empirical forces Schopenhauer is offending against his own principles of objective significance, he has an answer ready. In the first place he argues (somewhat obscurely) that the notion of forces is an 'abstraction from the province in which cause and effect reign, i.e. from ideas of perception, and means just the causal nature of causes at the point at which this causal nature is no further aetiologically explicable' (I, pp. 144–5). By this he presumably implies that he regards the notion partly as a sort of limiting concept, one that arises naturally in the course of the empirical investigation of phenomenal causes and to the employment of which all the explanatory sciences are at some stage necessarily driven; though that by itself scarcely seems to justify the various other things he finds it possible to say about the operations of the natural forces he mentions. Secondly, he categorically denies that he wishes to revive the mysterious 'entities and quiddities of the schoolmen', or indeed any doctrine which attributes to science the aim of uncovering 'real essences' imperceptible to

the senses. The demand that physics or any other form of inquiry should provide explanations in this sense is misconceived; for (to repeat) scientists are confined to exhibiting the order of our experience and to accounting for phenomena solely in terms of other phenomena. If in every case they leave behind an unresolved residue, this does not mean they have somehow failed as scientists; for the questions left over are not scientific questions at all.

Despite such defences and qualifications, it may all the same be urged that Schopenhauer would have done better, if only from the standpoint of consistency, to have adopted a more wholeheartedly phenomenalist analysis of scientific thinking; parts of his earlier doctrine of matter, for instance, are not easy to reconcile with the conceptions now being considered. Furthermore, it is difficult not to regard his theory of forces, conceived as being themselves 'outside space and time' but at the same time as striving – competing with one another, indeed – to achieve expression in the realm of spatio-temporal manifestation, as an animistic phantasy reflecting a basically confused idea of the relations that subsist between scientific terminologies and conceptual schemes on one side, and everyday thought and language on the other: difficult, too, not to feel that Berkeley, and later the nineteenth-century positivists, showed a more realistic insight into what is ultimately at issue, however misleading and defective their formulations may have been in many ways. For all his disclaimers, Schopenhauer gives too much the impression of trying to maintain an uneasy compromise between philosophical views of the nature of scientific knowledge which in the last resort are incompatible.

Yet, however much actual misunderstandings concerning the structure of scientific thinking may have contributed to Schopenhauer's pronouncements on the subject, we cannot leave matters here. For it seems clear that, even if he had accepted a different analysis of scientific concepts and propositions, this would not necessarily have involved any change in his fundamental attitude towards the status of science. I shall now try to show how two principal thoughts lay behind

that attitude, and how these two ideas can themselves be seen in the end to be linked.

To start with the first, we can perhaps reconstruct Schopenhauer's line of approach in the following way. Science purports to interpret what happens in the world, and in a way it can be said to do so. But the type of interpretation it offers is unsatisfactory, for two reasons. First, the explanation it provides of any particular event always involves a reference to certain other events or circumstances, and a similar demand for explanation can legitimately arise in respect of these; if that demand is satisfied, it may in turn be followed by another, and so on to infinity. Secondly, and more importantly, explanations of the kind in question all require us in the end to accept it as a 'brute fact' that things just do happen in a certain way, that experience just does conform to particular patterns. Up to a point the scientist can satisfy us concerning specific recurrences and correlations; by, for example, subsuming them under wider regularities or laws, or under some comprehensive theory which may itself be explicable in terms of a wider or more general theory. But we shall always finally have to acquiesce in the fact that phenomena behave in the way that they do and not otherwise, scientific interpretations of reality – whatever their complexity – merely showing *how* they behave. And this (Schopenhauer might have added) is essentially the situation to which he was alluding when he spoke – however misleadingly and with whatever further implications – of 'forces of nature'. Such a notion finds its way into our thought and speech precisely at the stage at which the scientist's explanatory and theoretical resources have been exhausted; yet, though it may look like one, it is not a further explanatory idea. On the contrary, it serves to signify our ignorance, expressing the absence of understanding we obscurely feel, the desire we have for further illumination. It does not, however, satisfy that desire: it merely marks what is missing.

But *what* is missing? What more could possibly be required? We seem here to be confronted with a familiar type of philosophical dissatisfaction, one liable to manifest itself when an entire category of discourse or reasoning is found not to meet

the requirements of a preselected model or standard. And with this in mind it might at first be suspected that Schopenhauer's discontent with scientific explanation sprang from the realization that scientific propositions are not *a priori* truths, that the theories and hypotheses the scientist formulates in order to account for what happens in the world are not derived from logically necessary premisses but rest upon a basis of 'pure contingency'. Certainly the claim that, because the propositions of natural science are not necessary propositions, they are incapable of explaining the world to our satisfaction, is one that has sometimes been upheld by philosophers, including, it would appear, some recent Existentialist writers. Nevertheless this particular view can hardly be attributed to Schopenhauer; we have seen that he was sharply insistent upon the limitations of deductive reasoning, and the idea that an account of reality could only be intellectually acceptable if it were presented in terms of propositions whose truth was logically guaranteed would have seemed to him absurd. The problem of the so-called 'contingency' of the world and our knowledge of it, which some theorists have lamented or else tried to reason away, was not (in this form at least) one that deserved serious philosophical attention.

On the other hand there was something in comparison with which (Schopenhauer considered) scientific explanations could clearly be seen to be inadequate, and that was the insight each of us has into his own bodily movements, his own actions. And it is of course here that his reflections on the limitations of scientific inquiry converge with his earlier reflections on the problems posed by the Kantian *Ding an sich*: in a characteristic image, he compares the situation to that of two mining engineers, both of whom are driving a tunnel and who, 'having started from two points far apart and having worked for some time in subterranean darkness . . . suddenly catch the sound of one another's hammers' (*WN*, Introduction). What is lacking in the natural scientist's accounts and explanations is precisely that which makes our own actions, considered as phenomenal events following upon the stimulation of certain 'motives', transparently intelligible to us; namely the inner

knowledge we have of ourselves as *will*. Without this knowledge, our position with regard to our physical movements would exactly parallel the position of the scientist confronted by events in nature; our actions would be understandable solely by reference to regularities or laws to which they were observed to conform. Thus a man would

> see his actions follow upon given motives with the constancy of a law of Nature . . . But he would be no closer to understanding the influence of the motives than he is to understanding the connexion of any other presented effect with its cause. He would then call the inner nature of these manifestations and actions of his body, which he did not understand, a force, a quality, or a character . . . All this, however, is not the case. . . . (I, p. 129)

Schopenhauer may, in fact, be interpreted as reversing the position of some of his Enlightenment predecessors: instead of accepting without demur the sufficiency of scientific models and procedures to explain the natural world and then trying to treat the data of introspective self-consciousness in a comparable manner, he takes the opposite course of appealing to the direct unmediated knowledge we have of ourselves as a yardstick by which scientific accounts of physical phenomena may be judged and (from a philosophical standpoint) found wanting.

If an examination of the form and content of scientific explanations leads back in the end to the conception of ourselves as willing agents, so too does an examination of their purpose and function; and this brings us to the second of the two notions mentioned above as underlying Schopenhauer's attitude to science. Let us take any scientific hypothesis or theory, and let us ask: Why do we value it? Why even was it thought of or formulated in the first place? Is the answer not that it is because it enables us to bring about or prevent happenings which we want, or under certain conditions may want, to bring about or prevent? Is not, in fact, the aim of all scientific inquiry in its essence technological, its worth lying simply in its utility? This certainly seems, in the main, to have been Schopenhauer's view. He suggests that the function of science is merely one of, so to speak, providing recipes according to which things can be moulded and manipulated to suit our various desires and pur-

poses: in its search for causes, for 'the where, the when, the why, and the whither of things', it has in mind always the discovery of means of satisfying our practical needs and wants, performing the role of picking out and tracing the relations between phenomena 'the final goal of which is always the relation to our own will' (I, p. 231).

Such observations fit in well enough with Schopenhauer's generally 'activist' conception of human knowledge, in the course of which he drew attention to many things frequently neglected by philosophers who have underestimated the extent to which human needs and interests determine the fashion wherein we explore and think about the world. But that should not blind us to the peculiarities in the view just outlined. Even if it were true, which it is not, that all scientific investigation and theorizing is motivated primarily, if not wholly, by the prospect of practical or utilitarian applications, it does not follow that what the scientist tells us can have no interest for us apart from its potential usefulness, or (as Schopenhauer also implies) that the reason why we value scientific discoveries must always be that they contribute to the effective manipulation of the world, and not that they enlarge our understanding of it. There is in any case no justification for speaking as if the two last-mentioned things were mutually exclusive: whatever may be the uses to which scientific results are put, it surely cannot be denied that the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity is also a determining factor in the importance we assign to them.

It is unlikely, however, that Schopenhauer would have been greatly moved by such considerations; the conception of the intellect (comprising 'understanding' and 'reason') as being 'exclusively intended for practical ends' was too deeply entrenched in his thinking for him to have taken them very seriously. The intellect, so considered, has a 'real' or essential function that may be identified quite independently of any of the reasons for which human beings may imagine that they pursue the investigation of natural phenomena. Thus he writes:

> It results from this whole objective consideration of the intellect and its origin that it is designed for the comprehension of

those ends upon the attainment of which depends the individual life and its propagation, but by no means for deciphering the inner nature of things and of the world . . . (III, p. 21)

It emerges, moreover, not only that intellectual activity of the sort Schopenhauer here has in mind can be accredited with a certain 'ultimate' purpose, but further that it is pre-eminently suited to the fulfilment of that purpose and that alone; and from this we might almost be tempted to assume that he regarded the human capacity for thinking, and especially for scientific thinking, as having developed as a kind of adaptive mechanism by which human beings have been enabled to come to terms with their environment and ensure their biological survival. But the latter suggestion, though plausible in the light of some of his remarks[1] and in line with the strongly naturalistic tendency that is a marked feature of much of his thought, can only be misleading if taken to imply that he envisaged some kind of evolutionary process by means of which the capacity in question came into existence as a result of certain causative factors in the physical world. For, in the first place, such a view would have meant explaining the limitations of the intellect in terms whose final validity he could not accept – though this was a type of difficulty to which (as we shall see) he did not always show himself to be so sensitive. Secondly, and above all, he wanted to exhibit our perceptual and intellectual apparatus in its direct non-phenomenal dependence upon that metaphysical 'will' of which each of us in his innermost consciousness knows himself to be the embodiment. All ordinary forms of knowledge, including scientific knowledge, are held to bear the imprint of the will, the latter being their *raison d'être*. And for this very reason they are all irremediably 'tainted': in conforming to them in our inquiries, we are necessarily committed to a way of viewing things which has significance only when seen in connexion with the will and its

1. At one point, e.g., he writes: '. . . every phenomenon must have adapted itself to the surroundings into which it entered . . . Every plant is therefore adapted to its soil and its climate, every animal is adapted to its element and the prey that will be its food, and is also in some way protected . . . against its natural hunter' (I, p. 208).

strivings, and which in its restless passage from phenomenon to phenomenon, in its ceaseless insatiable quest after causes and reasons, repeats the eternal unchanging character of its terrible source and spring. It is not merely that when we look at the world in the manner characteristic of scientific investigation we are precluded from truly understanding it: Schopenhauer also implies that the approach involved is unsatisfactory in some deeper, almost *moral* sense, since that to which it owes its particular form, and to the pursuit of whose ends it is by nature uniquely fitted, is intrinsically without worth; from the will flows the wretchedness of existence as we know it. Thus he not only claims that science, being adapted to other objectives, cannot give us final understanding; he further insists that the objectives it does serve are themselves to be condemned. From such considerations emerges his picture of the scientist bound to the service of the will, as committed to an unending and ultimately worthless quest and as at the same time deluded concerning the true nature of what he is doing – like a man who believes that 'by running we can reach the point where the clouds touch the horizon' (I, p. 239). From these considerations, too, arises the contrast he later went on to draw between science and art, and his theory of the latter as 'pure contemplation' or 'will-less' perception.

To summarize, then. Whether considered from the standpoint of the kind of information that explanations in the sciences give us, or from the standpoint of what it is that leads us to seek and demand such explanations, reflection on the shortcomings inherent in all forms of scientific interpretation of the world inevitably carries us back to the will, both as it expresses itself in our phenomenal actions and as it informs and directs our thought and knowledge. But the notion of the will remains vague, obscure. What does it mean? How far can it be said to illuminate any of the fundamental philosophical issues that have traditionally centred on the concepts of mind and behaviour? And – in the light of the limits he had drawn to human knowledge – to what extent, if at all, was he justified in interpreting and employing it as he did in order to provide a metaphysical account of reality as a whole?

The Nature of Man

All philosophers before me . . . place the real nature, or kernel of man, in the *knowing* consciousness, and accordingly have conceived and explained the I, or in the case of many of them, its transcendent hypostasis called soul, as primarily and essentially *knowing*, in fact *thinking*, and only in consequence of this, secondarily and derivatively, as *willing*. This ancient, universal, and radical error . . . must before everything be set aside (II, p. 409).

Like many of the sweeping and not always wholly accurate claims Schopenhauer made on behalf of his own philosophy, this contention is open to more than one interpretation; and he himself regarded it as applying, not only to age-old questions which have arisen in the sphere of philosophical analysis, but also to fundamental problems in ethics and (in one sense, at least) psychology. For Schopenhauer, indeed, no clear-cut division could be drawn between these various spheres; ethics, and at the 'deepest' level psychology also, were concerned with what he called the 'inner side' of things – that which lay beyond perceptual and scientific knowledge and hence fell within the sphere of philosophical investigation. That some writers have failed to recognize this and have spoken, for instance, as if ethics stood in need of being placed upon a 'scientific basis' (as the early Utilitarians did) would have seemed to him merely to offer additional evidence of the proneness of philosophers to misconceive the nature of their subject.

For the moment, however, we can ignore other possible implications of the statement quoted, and concentrate upon those that most readily spring to mind in the light of Schopenhauer's own remarks. These make it clear that the immediate target of his criticism was Descartes. For had not Descartes rested his philosophical position upon a certain famous demonstration; namely, the proof of his own existence as a conscious thinking thing which he expressed in the formula *Cogito, ergo sum*? And, following out the consequences of this proof, was he not also committed to the view that, in so far as his essence consisted in his thinking, his existence was logically independent of his

body, the latter being an extended material object with which he could be said in the last analysis to be only contingently (or 'accidentally') united? But, this being accepted, a problem had inescapably arisen for both Descartes and his followers concerning the manner in which the mind or 'rational soul' could be said to act upon the body. For it was hard to see how entities belonging to such wholly disparate spheres of reality, the 'mental' and the 'physical', could influence or affect one another at all; and within the Cartesian philosophy this question in fact came to be accorded the status of an ultimately impenetrable mystery, beyond the power of human intellect to divine. It was, however, apparently impossible to deny that such influence or 'determination' occurred; and Descartes was therefore driven to distinguish, from among the operations of the soul conceived as a purely thinking entity, certain 'volitions' or mental 'acts of will', these being 'thoughts' and 'determinate judgements' such that, on the occasion of their occurrence, our bodies move in certain ways – 'as when from our merely willing to walk, it follows that our legs are moved and we walk'.[1]

The Cartesian position, regarded as implying the separation of the will from the body and its assimilation to the operation of thinking rational consciousness, was one that Schopenhauer utterly rejected. Even so, it was not the only account he would appear to have had in view when he attacked previous theorists for misconceiving the role of the will and for producing in consequence distorted analyses of human behaviour and personality. To indicate what else he had in mind we may turn to writers of the British empiricist school, and to their eighteenth-century French disciples of whom he wrote that they had reduced mental and cognitive processes to 'mere *sensations* (*penser c'est sentir*) which, following Locke, they name *idées simples*'. For it is certainly arguable that these philosophers, in their anxiety to characterize all experience in terms of a single type of fundamental element, had pictured human consciousness in a fashion widely at variance with the palpable facts of self-knowledge; and in particular that, for all their ingenuity, they

1. *Les Passions de l'âme*, §18.

had failed to do justice to the indispensable notion we have of ourselves as persisting and continuously active beings inhabiting a common world. It is true that Berkeley, at least, had shown himself not insensitive to the limitations of theories which conceived consciousness as consisting of no more than a passive awareness of sensations and impressions, the self being merely the recipient of such experiences: he laid emphasis, for example, upon the 'notion' of 'active spirits' or agents exercising 'divers operations',[1] and felt the need to introduce some additional category of willed activity to supplement 'the bare passive reception or having of ideas'.[2] To Hume, on the other hand, it was difficult to see what more a person could really be than a 'bundle' of perceptions – a bundle, that is, of thoughts, images, feelings, and so forth contingently related to one another. Thus here even the suggestion that there must at any rate be an independent identical 'subject' to whom the sequences of sensations or impressions can present themselves or belong was apparently abandoned. Again, in the case of our knowledge of our own actions, it would seem that, for any thinker who maintains that we are ultimately aware of ourselves as the recipients or beholders of 'impressions and ideas', or who – at the extreme – claims that we can be identified with or 'reduced to' such experiences, this type of consciousness must be describable in the sensationalist vocabulary along with everything else. It therefore tended to be argued that the conception of an action comprises two distinguishable elements: the first, an introspectible occurrence or 'internal impression we feel and are conscious of';[3] the second, an 'external' impression of one's body or of some part of one's body moving in a particular way. On the principle that every impression or perception is a 'distinct' or 'loose and separate' existence, logically implying the existence of nothing beyond itself, the relations between the 'internal' and 'external' impressions referred to can only be contingent. Thus we become apprised of the successions in-

1. G. Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*, §27.
2. *Works*, I, p. 45. Cf. also his remark (ibid., p. 60): 'The soul is the will properly speaking and as it is distinct from Ideas.'
3. D. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 'Everyman', Vol. II, p. 113.

volved, and of the 'uniformities' by which they are governed, through experience alone; as Hume himself characteristically put it, 'in contemplating the operations of the mind on body ... we observe the motion of the latter to follow upon the volition of the former'.[1] And if the relation is of this kind, it is at least conceivable that it might not hold; there is, in fact, no indissoluble link between what in the ordinary way I choose to call my will and what I choose to call my body.

It is true that Schopenhauer does not specifically mention Hume in this connexion; as he held the Scottish philosopher in high regard, his references to him tend for the most part to be favourable in tone, and in one respect at least – that of the relation of reason to conduct – his own view is often reminiscent of Hume's. It is difficult, all the same, not to regard Schopenhauer's theory of the will in its broader implications as representing as much a protest against general accounts of action and self-awareness of the Humean type as against the Cartesian conceptions he explicitly singled out for attack: both were defective, needing to be replaced by a more realistic analysis. This he undertook to provide. Yet it might at first sight seem that his own doctrine of the 'knowing subject', put forward in his earlier discussion of the world under the aspect of idea, raises problems here. For can a theory which presupposes the existence of a 'transcendental' subject of knowledge really be said to be in any better case, from the standpoint now being maintained, than some of the theories Schopenhauer was concerned to criticize? More strongly, it could be urged that it is to the positing of just such an ultimate subject that a philosopher who considered the fundamental data of all human consciousness to be certain patterns of discrete 'inactive' sensations and ideas, and who was at the same time unwilling to embrace the radical Humean course of regarding the 'self' as simply a construct or system built out of such experiences, might feel himself to be ineluctably driven. As William James once remarked:

The only service that transcendental egoism has done to psychology has been to protest against Hume's 'bundle' theory

1. *Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding*, §58.

of the mind. But this service has been ill-performed: for the Egoists themselves, let them say what they will, believe in the bundle, and in their own system merely *tie it up* with their special transcendental string invented for that use alone.[1]

Now it should be remembered, in the first place, that Schopenhauer's remarks on what is to be understood by his 'subject of knowledge' are often tentative in the extreme, their obscurity being perhaps an index of conflicting elements in his own thinking which he never wholly resolved. Thus it must be admitted that the image of the subject as a kind of non-empirical observer – seeing but never itself seen, lying beyond the reach of knowledge and even of significant speech – is one that recurs in his writings, and it might be inferred from this that he envisaged a self-subsistent cognizing ego distinguishable from the spatio-temporal inhabitant of the perceptible world which each of us ordinarily takes himself to be and is understood by others to be; the self or mind being, as it were, set back or apart from the empirical data which form the contents of consciousness and from which a man's idea of his body and surroundings, as well as of his mental states, is ultimately constituted. But whatever obstacles may lie in the path of extracting a finally consistent position covering all that he says on the topic, I nevertheless think that such an interpretation fails to take account of much that Schopenhauer had in mind when he spoke of the knowing subject and its relations to the world. For (as we saw earlier) a large part of his concern was with the question of determining the conditions and forms under which ordinary human experience in general – whosoever's it might be – must present itself; from this viewpoint his references to the knowing subject, like his references to its necessary 'correlate', the objective world 'as idea', can be understood primarily as modes of exhibiting those universal 'limits'. And it appears implausible in the light of this to suggest that he thought that the notion of ourselves as 'knowing consciousnesses' (in the sense in question) could be cut loose from the notion of ourselves as phenomenal beings in the world. On the contrary, his entire account of perceptual experience involves

1. *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I, pp. 369–70.

the idea of observers standing under the *principium individuationis*, such observers being, in accordance with this principle, themselves 'objects among objects' with specific spatio-temporal locations; the conception of a perceiving subject, in other words, cannot be separated from the conception of an identifiable individual existing under the determinate forms of space, time, and causality, and there is no sense in which we can speak of the world as 'idea' that does not include the notion of its presenting itself to percipients who are always and necessarily aware of themselves as members of that world. Thus as phenomenal individuals we inevitably fall within the framework in terms of which, as 'bearers of the subject', we order and arrange our experience: from this point of view we are and must be conscious of ourselves as concrete perceptible beings capable of changing our position in relation to the things that surround us and of acting upon and altering our environment. And here, it might be contended, we have arrived at a position not far removed from that of ordinary thought. For do we not, at least in our usual way of looking at things, think and talk about ourselves and others as corporeal individuals who move and behave in a common physical environment, and who acquire knowledge and information about that environment through sensory observation and exploration, of which our bodies are always the medium? So conceived, we do indeed describe ourselves as having experiences and sensations, but we treat these experiences and sensations as securely ascribable to the embodied beings we believe ourselves to be, and not as the possessions of inaccessible 'subjects of consciousness' subsisting in some remote extra-mundane realm.

The problem Schopenhauer's theory presents at this stage is not so much that he adopts the above scheme as a more or less adequate characterization of the manner in which we view ourselves in relation to the world under the conditions of ordinary perceptual knowledge, as that he wishes at the same time to insist that in some more basic sense the scheme is deceptive and illusory: amongst other things, this leads him to present considerations and arguments which seem to presuppose the validity of the type of knowledge they purport to put in doubt.

Thus we frequently find him appealing to physiological evidence with the intention of showing that what we take to be objective happenings in the real world are after all no more than brain-phenomena induced by various sorts of sensory stimulation which are themselves to be accounted for in terms of 'changes of the body' (I, p. 24), and again, that the intellect itself is no more than 'a function of the brain'; forms of reasoning whose apparent circularity lends support to those critics who have complained that Schopenhauer's procedure involves a persistent and hopeless attempt both to transcend the established categories of thought and explanation and at the same time not to step outside the limits these impose. For physiological explanations, on Schopenhauer's own showing, are themselves valid solely at the level of 'idea': how then can they be appealed to in order to demonstrate that the form under which the world appears to us in perception is not a true representation of what it is 'in itself'? But whatever difficulties in principle Schopenhauer's arguments on this score may present, they at least serve to highlight a cardinal strand in his thinking, namely, that no philosophical account of our existence as intelligent beings can be accepted which does not do justice to the plain facts of our status in physical nature as creatures endowed with a certain bodily constitution and organization. And it seemed to him to be a great virtue of his own theory that it took cognizance of just those facts and rendered them intelligible. In arguing that we are essentially 'will', and that our bodies – in which the intellect 'presents itself physiologically as the function of an organ of the body' – are the objective manifestation of that will, he believed that he had steered a path between the impossible view of a person as being primarily a thinking knowing mind with a body (conceived as a kind of unnecessary appendage) attached, and the equally unacceptable supposition that a person can be described as if his physical characteristics and components exhausted his nature. And he saw his notion of will as also providing an explanatory philosophical concept which, while accounting for the circumstance that we are in one sense bound to identify ourselves with our bodies as phenomenal objects in the phenomenal world, at

the same time preserved the Idealist insight that knowledge of ourselves as bodies, like all perceptual knowledge, is dependent upon the particular forms prescribed by sensibility and understanding.

Clearly, though, the claim that we are will, and in self-consciousness know ourselves to be such, does not take us very far in the absence of further explanation of what the claim in question amounts to. Is it illuminating, for example, to say that we are 'really' this or 'really' that, without some further specification of the purposes for which the characterization is made? Surely there exists a considerable range of possible descriptions, all of which could properly be applied to human beings: according to what principles, and with a view to what kinds of comparison, is one such description to be selected in preference to others? And is not the particular characterization chosen by Schopenhauer anyway rather a strange one? The English word 'will' and its equivalent in German have a certain range of uses; we speak, for instance, of a man as having a strong or a weak will, of people doing things 'against their wills' or again of their doing them of 'their own free will', of some things as having been 'willed' or intended as opposed to others which have not, of wilful actions or personalities, and so on. But understood in these everyday terms the concept seems to have much too limited and partial an area of application to bear the kind of weight Schopenhauer apparently wished to assign to it. And it is indeed the case that a consideration of the possible contexts and ways in which the word is normally employed affords a highly unreliable guide to the understanding of Schopenhauer's own use of it. In general he gives to his concept of *will* a sense far more comprehensive than that which it bears in ordinary thought, as the following quotation alone makes clear:

> . . . not merely willing and purposing in the narrowest sense, but also all striving, wishing, shunning, hoping, fearing, loving, hating, in short, all that directly constitutes our own weal and woe, desire and aversion, is clearly only affection of the will, is an excitation, a modification, of willing and non-willing, is just that which, if it takes outward effect, exhibits itself as an act of will proper. (II, p. 412)

Further, it cannot be said that in his hands the notion preserves a fixed and constant meaning; he often seems ready to mould and manipulate its sense to suit his purposes when the need arises. Thus, in order to explain what he has in mind when he employs it to characterize our 'real essential nature', the only practicable course lies in tracing the somewhat convoluted path followed by his own elucidations and applications of the concept, at the same time keeping in view the varying character of the problems with which he was engaged. In doing so we shall see how far he diverged, not merely from ordinary ideas, but also from the Kantian conception of the will as implying rationality and the notion of conformity to self-imposed practical principles: nor did Schopenhauer hesitate to underline, repeatedly and insistently, the far-reaching implications of this crucial difference between himself and his master.

Action and Self-Knowledge

Perhaps the foremost of the philosophical problems to which Schopenhauer considered his theory of the will to be relevant was the difficult one of giving an analysis of what is involved in the notion of human action. When he describes human beings as embodiments of will, he wishes partly to draw attention to the general point that we are agents, and that we cannot in the ordinary way avoid thinking of ourselves as such: any philosophical interpretation of human nature that does not give full weight to this consideration must inevitably give a wrong account, not merely of the inescapable data of self-consciousness, but also of the very structure of our perception and knowledge of the world. But if so, the idea of what it is to be an agent, to act, must be explored.

Now it may be that, if we undertake such an exploration, we shall find ourselves feeling the need to choose between two alternative conceptions of action, each of which seems (for different reasons) initially attractive, but both of which appear on further reflection to present extreme difficulties.

First, we may be inclined to assert that what we must primarily be referring to when we talk about people doing things is their *behaviour*: that is to say, we must be referring to their

bodily movements, together (perhaps) with various other publicly observable events perceived to accompany or result from these movements. Thus suppose that I say that I am writing a letter: what I am really describing is a number of bodily occurrences and their consequences or effects. My hand, for example, is holding a pen and moving across the page, the pen, as my hand presses upon it, is leaving behind it certain marks on the paper, and so on; and we may feel that the descriptions of all our various performances must in the end be susceptible to an analysis in these terms, however complex and detailed the analysis may turn out to be in particular cases. On the face of it, elucidations of the notion of action along such lines have a fair degree of plausibility. My body, after all, is the medium through which I initiate all those changes in the world which I am prepared to acknowledge as being my actions, or at least as being due to my actions; if in the ordinary way I claim to have done or to be doing something, is not my claim always finally established by reference to my physical behaviour and its observable consequences? It is certainly possible that I may sometimes be mistaken in the reports I give, but what convinces me of my error, if it is not the occurrence or non-occurrence of certain public events about which others are (or at any rate could be) as well situated as myself to form opinions and judgements? On this view, then – and herein lies much of its appeal – there is nothing especially mysterious, nothing 'occult', involved in the idea of an action; the things people do are witnessable happenings along with other events in the world, wearing, so to speak, their characters on their faces. And it may further be inferred that the agent, in describing what he is about, need not be accredited with any private sources of information to which he, and only he, has access; his grounds for saying what he does about himself do not significantly differ in kind from those upon which he would make a similar statement about another person.

Here, however, doubts may begin to assail us. For, to start with, does not such an account blur certain essential differences which in fact distinguish the standpoint of the agent himself from that of the spectator who observes his actions? Is it, for

instance, really true that I always know what I am doing in the way in which I can be said to know what you are doing? Is there not a sense in which I may be said to be aware of the nature of my activities independently of all external evidence or outward signs, the very question of how my actions are to be described being itself inseparable from the question of what I conceive myself to be about? There are of course cases where I may speak of *discovering* that I am doing certain things, with accompanying emotions ranging from mild surprise to astonishment or horror, but these (it may be claimed) are precisely cases in which I shall be unlikely to admit responsibility, or at any rate full responsibility, for what has occurred. Locutions like 'I didn't realize [until e.g. it was pointed out to me] what I was doing', 'I found myself doing it', and so on, often function in varying degrees as excuses or exculpations; they may even serve to represent the action performed as not being, in the primary and most central use of the expression, 'my action'. Again, it must surely be granted that there are some occurrences which, while they are indisputably movements of my body, are of such a kind that they could not properly be described as 'actions' at all, such as reflexes, involuntary movements, and the like; and how could I distinguish such movements from those which I mean to make or perform, if not in virtue of something other than my observable behaviour? In the light of considerations like these there is a temptation to move to a position at the opposite pole from the one previously mentioned. For we may now be inclined to treat the essence of an action as if it were something pre-eminently 'inner', an introspectible occurrence to which the agent's physical movements stand simply in the relation of effects to antecedent causes or (less clearly) 'occasions'. Though they differ widely in a number of respects, both Cartesian and empiricist theories of action of the kind earlier alluded to can be said to reflect this idea; and it is in any case a recurrent one in philosophy. Writing in the present century, the English philosopher H. A. Prichard implied that the popular notion of an action comprised two components – on one hand, an indefinable 'mental activity' called *willing*, and, on the other, certain physical consequences includ-

ing bodily movements presumed to follow upon this as 'direct' or 'indirect' effects – and went so far as to speak as if only doing the former constituted 'acting' in the true sense of the word.[1]

Yet such views are likewise not free from difficulties. The conception of the interior event or experience postulated remains exceedingly obscure, and the obscurity is merely camouflaged, not removed, if – as we may be tempted to do – we concentrate upon some particular example, or some selected pair of contrasting instances, to the exclusion of others equally relevant. To give just one illustration; we may be struck by the difference between saying 'I moved my foot' (in circumstances where there was some obstruction to my altering the position of my limbs) and 'My foot moved' (in conditions where the movement followed as a reflex upon the striking of my knee with a hard object). And we may feel disposed to characterize the difference here by referring, e.g., to the consciousness of effort discernible in the one case and not in the other. But as soon as an attempt is made to extend this interpretation to cover other cases, generalizing it to characterize the difference between (say) movements which are voluntary and movements which are not, its limitations become manifest. Thus it would obviously be wrong to treat the presence of effort as a sufficient condition of calling an action 'voluntary' in the accepted sense of the term; plenty of actions done as a result of coercion, and therefore not voluntarily performed, may involve considerable effort. But if it is argued that the criterion at least serves to mark off all those actions which are not *in*voluntary from those which are, this also seems untrue. One can think of numberless cases where we should unhesitatingly affirm that what was done was in no way involuntary but where equally it would be out of the question to speak of the presence of effort or strain. Surely, though – it might still be urged – there must be *something* which distinguishes those actions I meant to perform from those I did not, those things I in some way 'willed' to occur from those that so to speak simply 'happened'? And here it seems reasonable to

1. *Moral Obligation*, p. 191: 'When I move my hand, the movement of my hand, though an effect of my action, is not itself an action, and no one who considered the matter would say it was . . .'

introduce the notion of *intention*. For the most part we seem to know the intentions with which we do things directly and non-inferentially, without depending upon evidence or observation: may not intention, then, represent what is being looked for, the interior essence of all action properly conceived? But here too there appear to be problems. Is every action which is not involuntary such that it can be said to have been done with a specific intention? Moreover, the concept of intention is itself highly complex and comprehensive, and has a very wide variety of applications. Is it possible to state in a single tidy formula, and without regard for these complexities, what it is to have an intention, or to act with a certain intention in mind? Doubtless it is tempting to use as one's model for all intentional action the case of a man who 'forms an intention' at a particular time and then carries it out when later the appropriate occasion arises. In such a case it may appear plausible to represent the intention so formed as the real 'act of will' and the subsequent behaviour as simply its result or causal consequence. Nevertheless, an account of this kind has curious features. In the first place, one might conclude from it that in acting deliberately a man had only to fix his mind upon the idea of doing a certain thing, the will's work ending here and the requisite movements of the bodily organs following (in William James's phrase) as 'a matter of course'.[1] But to present the matter thus seems to be to overlook the way in which a man's intentions are naturally thought of as 'entering into' what he does, his behaviour being guided by them and conforming to them; this is reflected in ordinary speech, where it is more usual to refer to actions as *expressing* or *embodying* intentions than as being effects of them. Further, the suggested interpretation gives rise to the question of whether it is really ever in the agent's power to actualize his intentions; it might be argued that all he can in the end be held responsible for is the mental act of will, he can never guarantee that the rest will follow. The hard fact remains, however, that it is for their observable deeds and attempts, and not merely for their 'inner' thoughts, that men are accorded praise and blame. Moreover, are there not in any case objections to treat-

1. *Principles of Psychology*, II, p. 564.

ing the model of intentional action mentioned above as adequate to cover all relevant instances? It may be true that in undertaking many performances a person will be able to say without a moment's hesitation what he is doing and why; but, while it may be incorrect to attribute such knowledge to his observation or interpretation of his own behaviour, does it follow that it must instead be ascribed to his acquaintance with certain distinguishable mental events that occurred prior to that behaviour? For it may be that, as an empirical fact, he is not aware of any such occurrences having taken place. Are we to say, on these grounds, that his behaviour was not guided by any intention, or that he did not mean to do what he did? Surely not.

Let us now turn from these general considerations to what Schopenhauer himself said on the subject of action. As I pointed out when discussing his theory of human agency in the context of his treatment of the Kantian 'thing-in-itself', he repudiated the idea that an act of will can be dissociated from the bodily behaviour in which it manifests itself, in the sense that we have to do here with two distinct occurrences. In recording the history of a man's actions, there are not two parallel stories to be told, one concerning a series of causative mental volitions (the story of his will) and the other concerning the effects of these volitions (the story – or part of the story – of his body). The notion of causality is indeed entirely inapplicable here, and in emphasizing this Schopenhauer takes to task his near-contemporary, Maine de Biran. There is in fact a striking closeness of thought between Maine de Biran and Schopenhauer on a number of topics:[1] the French philosopher was an acute and brilliant critic of eighteenth-century philosophical psychology, arguing that the 'sensationalist' vocabulary in which Condillac and his followers had sought to portray the human mind and consciousness patently failed to do justice to '*le fait primitif du sens intime*', and claiming that we are primarily aware of ourselves as sources of bodily activities springing from our own wills, the unique sense of our identity and

1. See A. Baillot, *Influence de la philosophie de Schopenhauer en France* (Paris, 1927), Appendix, Ch. VIII.

individuality as persons being directly connected with this – '*l'activité est l'état primitif et naturel du moi humain*'.[1] More generally, Biran maintained that enormous confusion had been engendered by trying to carry over into psychology modes of explanation which find their proper application in the spheres of the physical and observational sciences. There things *are* viewed purely as 'passive' phenomena, their relations and properties being investigated from this standpoint: we cannot, however, seek to understand our own natures in such a manner without doing violence to the data of the inner consciousness. It was Schopenhauer's contention and criticism, on the other hand, that Biran had himself fallen into these very errors in the account he gave of the connexion between will and body. For, by treating the 'act of will as cause . . . followed by the movement of the body as effect', he had attempted to exhibit the notion of causality as itself derivative from the experience of willed action. But this derivation is unacceptable, the premise from which it proceeds being false – 'we certainly do not recognize the real immediate act of will as something different from the action of the body, and the two as connected by the bond of causality; but both are one and indivisible' (II, p. 206). It is arguable that in raising this objection Schopenhauer partly misunderstands Biran, and that the difference between them is to some degree verbal. Thus it could be pointed out that, although Biran uses causal terminology, he employs it in a special sense here to signify what he calls 'real' causation in contrast with the mere expectation of a given succession of separate 'impressions'; he does not speak of the act of will and the corresponding physical movement as two distinct facts but rather as '*deux éléments nécessaires d'un même fait*', claiming (in a manner itself reminiscent of Schopenhauer) that '*aussitôt que je veux réellement, et que le ressort de mon activité se débande pour ainsi dire, le mouvement est effectué et créé dans un seul et même instant, sans qu'il y ait la moindre succession perceptible entre la cause et l'effet; autrement il y aurait prédétermination et non point vouloir proprement dit*'.[2] Yet, be this as it may, it is at any rate

1. *Œuvres choisies de Maine de Biran*, ed. H. Gouhier, pp. 248–9.
2. ibid., pp. 239–40.

certain that in Schopenhauer's case the notion of an act of will is inextricably connected with the notion of behavioural expression and manifestation; he writes, for instance, that 'the knowledge which I have of my will, though it is immediate knowledge, cannot be separated from that which I have of my body'; it is through the particular acts of my will, always 'objectifying themselves' phenomenally in the form of bodily movements, that I become aware of my true nature, and from this point of view 'I cannot really imagine this will apart from my body' (I, p. 132). It is true that we often tend to think that pre-formed resolutions or decisions taken in advance represent the true operations of our wills, what we do in the physical sense being the mere effects of these operations: that, however, is an illusion, although it is an idea which for various reasons naturally appeals to us. In Schopenhauer's words:

> Resolutions of the will relating to the future are merely deliberations of the reason about what will be willed at some later time, not real acts of will. Only the carrying out stamps the resolve as will, for till then . . . it merely exists in the reason *in abstracto*. It is only in reflection that to will and to act are different; in reality they are one. (I, p. 130)

And elsewhere, in further support of this, he writes that

> only the resolve [*Entschluss*], and not the mere wish, is a valid indication of [a man's] character, both for himself and for others; but for himself, as for others, the resolve becomes a certainty only through the deed.

In a 'healthy mind', therefore, it is chiefly deeds which oppress the conscience, rather than wishes or thoughts, for it is the former that hold up to us the true 'mirror of our will' (I, p. 387).

Despite the specific contrast he draws between such ideas and Cartesian theories according to which the will 'came to be regarded as an act of thought and to be identified with the judgement', it may be considered that Schopenhauer has once again exposed himself to the objection of having failed sufficiently to distinguish between different issues. Possibly some philosophers, when discussing human action, have shown a

regrettable tendency to introduce references to obscure psychic faculties and quasi-mechanical agencies, or have played fast and loose with various highly indeterminate terms of which 'volitions' is the most notorious; to that extent Schopenhauer's emphasis upon behavioural criteria may seem to represent a refreshing change of standpoint. But it is arguable that, in so far as his heroic attempt to close the gap between will and body leads him to override central distinctions forced upon us by the consideration of concrete situations, what he says is in its turn seriously misleading; and that it was partly a sensitivity to such distinctions, implicit in the language we employ in the characterization of behaviour, which was in the first place responsible for the postulation of 'acts of will' discriminable from overt behaviour: the results of talking in this way may have been generally unfortunate, but it does not follow that it is totally devoid of any rational basis. To affirm, as Schopenhauer affirms, that what a man 'truly' wills he necessarily does, that in the last analysis his will *is* what he does, only sounds plausible until we set the claim against the plain facts of common thought and speech. For here it is at least clear that we often, for instance, recognize discrepancies between what a man has decided or made up his mind to do and his actual performance. And even if such discrepancies cannot be accounted for (as sometimes they are) by the fact that unforeseen circumstances arose which prevented him from carrying out his stated intention, are we *always* prepared to take the course of asserting that in no real sense can a resolve to have done the thing in question be attributed to him? Again, do we really want to claim in every case that a man only knows whether he has decided to do something when he has in fact done it? Yet it is to saying just such things that Schopenhauer's thesis, strictly interpreted, apparently commits us.

Whatever force objections like these may have, they at any rate serve to bring home the point that Schopenhauer's ideas on the subject cannot finally be understood without reference, on the one hand, to his views on human psychology and character and, on the other, to his ethical theory, particularly as it concerned the nature of individual moral worth and responsi-

bility; these colour and largely determine the type of treatment he accords to the crucial notion of action itself. To believe that he provided, or even sought to provide, a purely descriptive account of the concept, conforming as far as possible to the ways in which it and other concepts integrally associated with it are ordinarily understood and used, would certainly be incorrect. It would be nearer the truth to say that what he writes on this topic contains an implicit *criticism* of customary conceptions of behaviour as they find expression in the everyday descriptions and classifications we employ, as well as a more overt attack upon the interpretative models and schemes offered by his philosophical predecessors. He might have agreed that the interpretations these philosophers had proposed had been suggested by, and were partly meant to accord with, accepted ways of thinking about human conduct, only to add, however, that if this was the case it would not be surprising to discover that some of the ideas they put forward were exaggerations of errors already sanctioned by popular acceptance or to be found petrified in the form of concepts in common use. Certainly his metaphysics will be misapprehended if it is treated as an attempt to correct purely philosophical misconceptions of our natures by an appeal to different ideas implicit in our everyday thinking: rather, the map of ordinary thought must itself be re-drawn or re-interpreted in the light of what he considered to be incontestable psychological truths which every person of perception would unhesitatingly assent to if he only reflected with an open mind upon his experience. What were these truths?

Schopenhauer was, in the first place, deeply impressed by the fact that people do not always act in conformity with their avowed beliefs and intentions, and that the desires and purposes they attribute to themselves – often with apparent sincerity and without any conscious attempt to deceive others or themselves – do not necessarily correspond to the real desires and purposes by which they are guided. He insists again and again, in passages of great penetration, that we are frequently surprised at the manner in which we behave, at our responses when faced with certain sorts of situations: surprised, because what we do

conforms so little to what we supposed our aims to be, or because it diverges too sharply from the principles we fondly believed to govern our actions. We are apt to imagine that our deeds are subject to and spring from consciously-premeditated determinations, that they proceed directly from deliberate choices made in the light of considerations and desires which we fully recognize ourselves, even if (for reasons of prudence or possibly shame) we are not always willing to disclose them. It is from this idea that the philosophical notion that an action is essentially something involving a conscious mental process of prior 'willing', which sets in motion the body, draws so much of its life and potency; nevertheless, Schopenhauer maintains that it cannot be upheld once it is exposed to the hard strong glare of lived experience, as is borne out by those moments of moral insight when we do in fact become aware of its falsity. Only too often it requires the deed to convince us of the reality of our imagined purpose, its being impossible beforehand for us to penetrate the 'secret workshop' of the will in order to gauge what we are really about. And to underline the point he is making Schopenhauer cites a number of concrete examples which illustrate the true position, namely, that we frequently 'don't know what we desire or what we fear', only our actions and reactions being capable of enlightening us concerning the true state of affairs. We may, for instance, 'entertain a desire for years without even confessing it to ourselves, or even allowing it to come to clear consciousness; for the intellect must know nothing about it, because the good opinion we have of ourselves would thereby suffer. But if it is fulfilled, we learn from our joy, not without shame, that we have wanted this – for example, the death of a near relation whose heir we are' (II, p. 422). Again, it is sometimes only an accident that discloses to us the true character of our actions: thus we may 'refrain from doing something, on as we believe purely moral grounds; but afterwards we discover that we were only restrained by fear, for as soon as all danger is removed we do it' (ibid., p. 423). Elsewhere Schopenhauer notes that frequently, in practical day-to-day business, even the slips and mistakes we make in carrying things out may not be so inno-

cent as they seem; there is, for example, 'the fact that in doing accounts we make mistakes much oftener in our own favour than to our own disadvantage', and this without any conscious intention of deceit or dishonesty but 'merely from the unconscious tendency to diminish our *debit* and increase our *credit*' (ibid., p. 433). He suggests, too, that in cases where a man has apparently acted precipitately and without thought, to the extent that it may appear in his own eyes that he has brought about what he did not really desire, a deeper and more searching look will reveal an unacknowledged significance in his behaviour: 'it must be observed that in order to deceive themselves, men pre-arrange seeming instances of precipitancy, which are really secretly considered actions', such fine devices frequently tricking no one but the agent himself. (I, p. 382)

The terminology with which psychoanalytical literature has made us familiar, and in which we should now tend to characterize phenomena of the kind Schopenhauer instances, was not of course available to him. All the same some of the insights that gave rise to that terminology were clearly present in his thought, and he found for them his own characteristic mode of expression, not only in the general contrast he drew – at least in the context of his theory of action and motivation – between 'knowing intellect' and underlying 'will', but also in the interpretations he provided of more specific concepts. Thus we have already seen how he uses the notion of a 'resolve' so that it is a condition of its proper application that a person should carry out in practice the resolve attributed to him; if he does not do so it can only be said that he *thought* that this was his resolve (assuming him to have been sincere), and that he was suffering from some kind of misapprehension. The question now arises of how such 'misapprehensions' are to be characterized; for it is not an uncommon occurrence for a person to be said in the ordinary way to be resolved upon a particular course of action which he does not carry out when the occasion for doing so presents itself – he may change his mind, or perhaps he has some failure of nerve, or again, possibly he just forgets. Schopenhauer was by no means always consistent in what he wrote on this topic; nevertheless two principal lines of

thought can, I think, be distinguished. Sometimes he suggests simply that there is an accepted meaning of terms like 'resolve', 'decision', and so forth, according to which it is permissible to speak of a person's failing to do or try to do what he resolved to do, these terms being understood to refer to some sort of intellectual act whereby we seek to determine, or commit ourselves to, future courses of conduct. He implies, though, that such a concept of resolution is really a confused or misleading one, since, whatever we may believe to the contrary, it is actually never in our power to control our future behaviour in this way; it is not what we consciously 'set ourselves to do' that in the end decides things. More often, however, he seems to take the different course of claiming that what in the usual manner pass for resolves are properly speaking no more than self-predictions made in advance by the prospective agent concerning how he will act when the time comes. Thus in an article on 'Ethics' (*Parerga*, II, p. 247) he suggests that 'we never really form more than a conjecture of what we shall do under circumstances that are still to come', all asseverations of intention being, when properly understood, simply hypotheses of somewhat limited reliability concerning the subsequent behaviour of those who make them. And again, in his main work (II, p. 472), it is said of so-called 'resolutions of the will' (*Willensbeschlüsse*) that they are 'a matter of the intellect alone': as such 'they are nothing more than completed calculations of the relative strength of the different opposing motives; they therefore certainly have great probability but no infallibility'.

Now it is arguable that, if a man says that he intends or has made up his mind to do a certain thing, he at least *implies* in some sense that he believes he will do, or at any rate try to do, the thing in question. This is not the same, however, as claiming that his statement can be treated purely as a prediction about his future conduct, which he puts forward on the basis of certain calculations of probability or evidence. Yet, curious though the consequences of such an interpretation may seem to be from the standpoint of everyday thought, it is one that is consistent with the account Schopenhauer offered in a number of places of what he chose to regard as the essential nature of

all deliberation. For in those it is suggested that what is ordinarily described as a process of coming to a decision really consists in no more than a man's setting before himself the facts relevant to the situation that confronts him and then reviewing 'intellectually' the possible courses of action open to him in the light of the facts and of the foreseeable consequences, this operation being perhaps followed by his making some sort of forecast about what he will do when the moment for action strikes. The intellect is said to furnish the will with considerations bearing upon the choice, but 'it only learns afterwards, completely *a posteriori*, how they have affected it' (II, p. 421). Generally speaking, in fact, 'the intellect is originally quite a stranger to the decisions of the will', remaining so completely excluded from the latter's actual resolutions and secret intent that it sometimes can only learn of them like those of a stranger, 'by spying and taking by surprise', and must catch the will in the act of expressing itself in order to get at its real intentions (ibid.).

The comparatively restricted claim, suggested by Schopenhauer's particular examples of self-deception, that our purposes are not *always* transparent to us in the fashion we suppose them to be, and that what a man in good faith thinks or says about himself may not be finally authoritative when the question is one of what he really wants or is aiming at, has obvious force. Further, to meet cases like those to which he refers, it may be justifiable and illuminating to apply certain explanatory concepts beyond the sphere of their customary employment, as the development of much modern psychological theory has shown. But while this may be granted, it remains important to distinguish such contentions from wider and more ambitious projects involving the introduction of wholesale adjustments over the entire field of discourse concerned with the description of human conduct. In Schopenhauer's case the picture he drew conflicts, and was intended to conflict, with the whole assumption that what we do lies within the aegis of our own fully conscious and rational control; and in order to shift the accepted standpoint he was sometimes prepared to go to extreme lengths in reinterpreting the language in which

deliberate choice and decision are described. For the notions of 'waiting' or 'spying' upon one's behaviour in order to discover what one is about are precisely the notions that seem to be out of place here. If a man is asked whether he is going to do a certain thing, he may reply that he is, citing the reasons that have led him to this decision. But he will hardly – as, on this version of Schopenhauer's account, it appears that he should – think of the reasons so adduced as the grounds upon which he bases a particular provisional expectation, subject to future confirmation; nor is this point affected by the fact that occasions *sometimes* arise when it is possible to maintain that what a man believes to be his reasons are not his 'real' reasons, or again even to hold that his not having done what (perhaps sincerely) he said he had resolved to do shows that he had not after all really decided to do it. Yet it is in just such reconstructions of familiar ideas that we strike upon what Schopenhauer himself regarded as the central core of his concept of personality: the insistence, that is to say, upon the will's independence of direction by the intellect, and the correlative claim that the former is 'first and original', the latter being merely 'added to it as an instrument'. We cannot through an act of thought 'determine to be this or that . . . to act thus or thus'; to talk in this way is to reverse in Cartesian fashion the true state of affairs, which is that a man '*knows* himself in consequence of and in accordance with the nature of his will, instead of *willing* in consequence of and in accordance with his knowing' (I, p. 378). This is not to deny that the intellect has the function of discovering and presenting the various possibilities open to the will in specific situations, by virtue of its knowledge of the circumstances in which the agent is placed and of the effects that are likely to ensue upon the pursuit of different courses of action; it is only to claim that the intellect cannot determine in advance, through conscious acts of choice, the 'decisions' that will ultimately be taken in response to the information it provides. The will, in other words, is 'the strong blind man who carries on his shoulders the lame man who can see' (II, p. 421).

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One line of general criticism, prompted by Schopenhauer's doctrine of action and its connexion with the will, might take the following form.

It has already been pointed out that the inclination to speak of 'acts of will' or 'volitions' as mental operations or events invariably preceding or causing certain sorts of physical movement originated partly (though not wholly) in the puzzle of how a line is to be drawn between those things we are said to do deliberately or on purpose or at any rate in some sense 'intentionally', and those things we are said not to do in such ways. Schopenhauer rejected all 'volitional' accounts of the type in question: did he, however, provide an acceptable alternative solution to the kind of difficulty these accounts have traditionally, if mistakenly, been put forward to meet? And in answer it may be said that he did not. On the contrary, it may be objected that it sometimes seems as if he were prepared to construe the notion of a man's will so widely that it can be used indifferently to cover any movement of his body that is not actually compelled to occur by the action of some external physical force; and this seems to deprive the concept, not merely of its normal meaning, but also – by robbing it of its distinctive significance – of its potential value to Schopenhauer himself as representing a separate and unique category of interpretation in terms of which the 'riddle' of things can be uncovered and the inadequacies of scientific explanation exposed. Again, it might be claimed that it must be possible to speak of the reality of effective conscious choice or purpose in at least some instances, if the notion of 'secret' or 'unconscious' operations of the will is to preserve an intelligible sense: does not Schopenhauer, however, sometimes appear to be guilty of so stretching the latter notion that no cases of our experience as agents can be specified to which it does not apply? It is true that he refers to the capacity of 'elective decision' or *Wahlentscheidung* as a distinguishing characteristic of human beings, and is ready to differentiate between actions in which it is exhibited and 'unconsidered' ones that have been e.g. committed in some blind passion or emotion (I, p. 387). But he thinks of this capacity as being preeminently displayed in cases where we deliberate before acting

in the manner previously described; and even here (as we saw) the actual decision is spoken of as springing from the will alone, having its source beneath the surface of the thinking consciousness and only rising to final certainty for the latter in its outward manifestation through the deed. Nor is that the end of the difficulties. For if bodily behaviour is treated – as Schopenhauer tends to treat it – as the sole ultimately authoritative and incontrovertible mark of the character and direction of our wills, always to be assigned priority over what we may think or say about our aims and objectives, it would appear that we have been reduced to the status of mere spectators, in the strictest sense, of the workings of that inner nature which (he has strenuously claimed) we know in an immediate and non-perceptual manner to be ours. In other words, have we not now been presented as being *simply* objects to ourselves, in the very sense in which he insisted earlier we are not and can never be – the alleged unique consciousness of ourselves as will turning out to be no different in principle from the kind of knowledge Schopenhauer has no hesitation in describing as purely phenomenal? And in the same connexion it may also be urged that a further problem arises concerning the relation between my will and myself. For if in the last resort I have to *discover* what my will is by observing what I do, the ways in which I respond to considerations and circumstances, can I any longer feel in the full sense responsible for my will, regard it as being truly mine? It seems to have become in a fashion cut off from me, in the way in which the will of another is separate from me: why, then, should I feel any more answerable for what I will and do than for what somebody else wills and does?

To defend Schopenhauer against all of these objections would certainly not be easy; they are, in any case, closely related to problems arising from his ethical theory, which will be discussed at a later stage. But here it may be suggested that at least some of them possibly rest upon a too narrow and one-sided interpretation of what he was trying to say.

First of all it can be re-emphasized, as a merit of Schopenhauer's account, that he drew attention (however indirectly) to the way in which, even in their everyday employment, con-

cepts relating to 'the will' – such, for instance, as wanting, intending, trying, and choosing – have a far greater complexity than has always been assumed by philosophers. To imagine that their meaning can be given simply by pointing to various distinct 'interior' occurrences discernible by introspection is, at the very best, to accept a vastly over-simplified view of their functions in thought and language; and if, in throwing into relief the relevance of 'outward' criteria in the particular fashion he did, Schopenhauer was led to assign to certain terms an interpretation liable to raise problems as formidable as those that beset earlier theories of the kind he attacked, his stress upon the integral connexions between the notions of will and body at any rate represented a sharp corrective to previous dogmas. Important, too, was his recognition of the role a neglect of these things had played in the development of typically dualistic 'mind-body' theories, and of how such neglect had helped to foster views of self-knowledge whereby we were accredited with unassailably perfect insight into our own natures. Schopenhauer showed considerable psychological perspicacity and prescience in the latter regard: while in the former he anticipated in noteworthy respects the philosophical challenge to the entire Cartesian approach – exemplified by the later writings of Wittgenstein and by the work of Gilbert Ryle – in the present century.

Secondly, whatever the impression produced by some of his remarks, Schopenhauer would undoubtedly have repudiated the suggestion that he subscribed to some kind of fully-fledged 'physicalism', and would not have wanted to be understood as claiming, for example, that all knowledge of mental states can be expressed in purely behavioural or physiological terms. Thus in the case of what he refers to as 'affections of the will', certain of these are implicitly admitted to occur in the absence of any kind of overt behavioural manifestation whatever: for instance, wishes. It is true that he insists, in support of the doctrine of the unity of body and will, that 'every violent movement of the will', when experienced by the subject as a strong emotion or passion, at the same time exhibits itself in physical form – the body is convulsed, the course of its

functions disturbed (I, p. 139). But he would also have maintained that what serves as the basis of a person's descriptions of his own emotional states differs fundamentally from that upon which he bases his judgements concerning the emotions of another. It was, indeed, this complex feature of descriptions of states of ourselves that led him to speak of the 'double knowledge' each person has of himself; insisting, however, that the knowledge in question was not 'double' in the sense of being knowledge of two distinct types of entity, but only in the sense of being knowledge of two distinguishable *aspects* of what is in essence one and the same. Thus it is certainly the case (he would have held) that we can be non-perceptually aware of our own passions, emotions, and so forth, in addition to being perceptually aware of the behaviour that represents their natural expression: the mistake here would only lie in treating the first as distinguishable from the second in the sense for instance, of causing it, instead of regarding both as two sides of the same coin.

These considerations are also relevant to the objection that, in underlining behavioural criteria in the manner he does, Schopenhauer blurs the contrast between the kind of knowledge I have of myself, conceived as a self-moving agent responsible for my acts, and the kind of knowledge I have of persons and things apart from myself, of whose movements and functionings I am merely the observer or interpreter. He might have replied that this criticism is prompted by an ambiguity implicit in his (admittedly very loose and indefinite) use of the term 'will'. For it is one thing to maintain that I am finally made cognizant of what I 'really' seek or 'really' intend by finding what I do when placed in certain circumstances or when certain information is made available to me; under such conditions I may indeed regard myself from a point of view similar to that from which I regard other people, and draw inferences and conclusions about myself in much the same way as I should about them. But (Schopenhauer might have argued) it is another thing to assert that *when* I perform the actions I do perform, I am aware of doing them in the way in which I am aware of somebody else's actions. Where the case is of the latter

sort, I can always intelligibly be asked *how* I know what is going on, and I may reply by referring, for example, to what I see or hear. On the other hand, the knowledge I have of the movements I make with my own body does not, in a large number of instances, seem to be of this kind; it may even be held that the question 'How do you know that this is what you are doing?' has no natural application here, this being so, not because the conditions of observation are so good that the question seems superfluous, but rather because such knowledge does not require observation at all. And it was, I suspect, the kind of 'transparency' our own movements can appear to have when looked at from this point of view – so that it might seem as if we had an awareness of them which functioned apart from ordinary sense-perception, while at the same time not being obviously based upon independently identifiable organic sensations and feelings – that largely lay behind Schopenhauer's claim that a man's own consciousness of his particular 'acts of will' was both 'immediate' and *sui generis*. This, too, would partly help to explain his contention that we understand our own behaviour in a way in which the natural scientist is for ever debarred from understanding the movements and workings of 'external' phenomena; in so far as we are directly aware of what we do as expressing and exhibiting our wills in the manner described, we achieve (it is implied) a grasp of our behaviour different from and infinitely more satisfying than any attainable merely by bringing it beneath laws and hypotheses of the type characteristically employed in scientific interpretations of the phenomenal world. It is in the elusive 'sense of ourselves acting', in fact, that we come closest to the mysterious *Ding an sich*.

It may of course be objected that, even taking account of what has just been said, the suggestion that I am aware of my movements under some special aspect, additional to the physical one, remains obscure. Schopenhauer is conspicuously reticent about the *nature* of the 'inner' experience of acts of will which he ascribes to us; and it might further be argued that in knowledge of the kind in question it is still surely of what I do as *bodily* movement (and not as something else) that

I claim to be aware, even if we grant that the *mode* of my awareness sometimes differs from that in which I am conscious of the movements of others. There is, moreover, another difficulty. For suppose we accept the distinction drawn between non-perceptual awareness of ourselves as will and the perceptual knowledge we have of our own behaviour: is not Schopenhauer now confronted with a dilemma? If he claims that in inner experience we are directly conscious of ourselves as will, it follows that the will falls within the range of our experience. But must it not then be 'idea' in the Schopenhauerian sense of that which is presented to a knowing subject; and if so, how can he claim that our acquaintance with it gives us access to the thing-in-itself? For the latter by definition lies beyond the realm of appearance, beyond the illusory realm of representation which (following Indian thought) he sometimes called 'the veil of Māyā'. If, on the other hand, the will is not idea but noumenal, how can he assert that we have experience of it? And what then becomes of his empirically-grounded metaphysics, his belief that he had provided an explanation of the world as a whole that was not open to the Kantian strictures upon pure speculation? Does not his theory of conceptual significance alone appear to rule out such an interpretation of his primary explanatory concept as illegitimate?

On this point it is worth noting that in a supplementary chapter to *The World as Will and Idea* (18) Schopenhauer did as a matter of fact drastically qualify his earlier claims regarding the knowability of the will. Thus he admits that 'even the inward experience we have of our own will by no means affords us an exhaustive and adequate knowledge of the thing-in-itself'; for even here we are still limited by the conditions imposed by the subject–object polarity essential to knowledge as he has described it, and on this account we are not thoroughly 'intimate' with the will even in self-consciousness. Though 'inner knowledge is free from two forms which belong to outer knowledge, the form of *space* and the form of *causality*,' such knowledge is, for all that, not free from the form of time; hence everyone knows his will only temporally, 'only in its successive . . . *acts*, not as a whole, in and by itself' (II, pp. 406–7). And

elsewhere he suggests, in an arresting passage, that when we try to gain full comprehension of ourselves by turning our knowledge inwards, 'we find ourselves like a hollow glass globe, from whose vacancy a voice speaks': but the source of this voice is not to be found within the globe, and 'whilst we desire to comprehend ourselves, we find, with a shudder, nothing but a vanishing spectre' (I, p. 358). In such passages as these, and notwithstanding the very different impression gleaned from the story told in other parts of the book, the will as thing-in-itself seems finally to have been retired beyond all cognitive range. On this view it is no longer the case that 'inner knowledge', any more than outer or perceptual awareness, gives us actual direct cognizance of the will. What we come upon through both are no more than expressions of the will experienced at the level of idea; and, although it is implied that by way of the former we obtain a more vivid and immediate conception and realization of its true nature, because here 'the thing-in-itself has in great measure thrown off its veil', the point remains that it still does not appear 'naked' (II, p. 407).

By taking this step, then, Schopenhauer grasps, if somewhat reluctantly, one horn of the dilemma with which it seems he is inescapably faced. In so doing, of course, he by no means avoids the logical difficulties such a move entails for his metaphysical procedure as originally presented; that is something which neither his proclivity for carrying on his discussion at various different levels at once, nor his tendency to oscillate between apparently distinct versions of the doctrine he is putting forward, can effectively conceal. And with such considerations in mind it is no doubt tempting to follow Bradley in dismissing Schopenhauer's theory of the will – at any rate in the form in which it finally emerges and when stripped of its empirical trappings – as no more than 'an uncritical attempt to make play with the unknown', offering merely 'the pretence of a ground or explanation, where the ground is not understood or the explanation discovered'.[1] For if we have to do with something that is literally unknown and unknowable, how can it be thought to aid our comprehension of the sensible world in any

1. F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 428.

conceivable way? What sense can there be in talking of such an entity at all?

The World as Will

It would be a barren procedure, when studying a metaphysical system like that of Schopenhauer, to fix attention solely upon the formal criticisms and objections to which it stands exposed. Inevitably any attempt, philosophically or otherwise, to upset or alter long-established and firmly entrenched frameworks of thought gives rise at some stage to conceptual uncertainties and difficulties; in Schopenhauer's case, where strong urges of a speculative and moral nature also operated, the theoretical structure he set up is encumbered as well by exaggerations and simplifications, and it cannot be denied that the combination of these things sometimes led him into confusion and inconsistency. Nevertheless, while acknowledging such defects, it is as well not to lose sight of the fact that his ideas produced a very powerful impact upon the outlook of his time, and not least in the sphere of imaginative literature. Writers like Tolstoy and Turgenev, and later Hardy and Mann (to name a few), were impressed in very different ways by his picture of the world; they shared, however, the view that his system as a whole shed a vivid piercing light upon features of human life and personality which had previously been accorded little recognition, if indeed they had been noticed at all.

This aspect of Schopenhauer's philosophy has already been touched upon in connexion with his analysis of human action, the latter forming part of a wider theory in which the principal sources and springs of human conduct are ultimately located in certain deepseated tendencies and impulses. Of the character of such drives (it is implied) we are frequently entirely ignorant, with the result that we are inclined regularly to misdescribe and misinterpret their manifestations in everyday forms of behaviour and emotion, constantly portraying them in a way that is acceptable to our own erroneous beliefs about ourselves. Self-deception, illusion, are in other words not rare or abnormal elements in human life, but part of its very fabric; and if the

factors which really motivate our actions were revealed to us in their true colours they would astonish and appal us. We suppose that we are autonomous agents, 'free' and capable of making rational choices between alternatives, but in so supposing we merely flatter and comfort ourselves, not recognizing the dark hidden powers concealed within our own natures: should we become aware of these we should realize our final impotence, our incapacity to change ourselves or make ourselves other than we are. Likewise we confidently imagine that we know what we want, what will finally satisfy us, but here again we are deceived. Things that appear delightful and desirable in prospect turn to ashes in our hands once we have them; 'they ... grow stale, are forgotten, and though not openly disowned, are yet always thrown aside as vanished illusions' (I, p. 214). Nor is the general tendency we have to present our characters and capacities in a delusive light, to rationalize our inclinations, to see ourselves as what we are not, a mere accident of our make-up, an unaccountable quirk of nature or of fate. On the contrary, we unconsciously and inwardly *stop* ourselves from allowing the true state of affairs to come to our knowledge; formulated in Schopenhauer's own terms, the will is capable of making its supremacy felt 'by prohibiting the intellect from entertaining certain ideas, absolutely preventing certain trains of thought from arising', so that we avoid the 'shock of painful or unworthy emotion' that would otherwise ensue (II, pp. 420–1). This propensity we have for 'putting things from us', for not permitting disagreeable or disturbing truths relating to ourselves to rise to consciousness, takes many forms; not the least significant of them are those connected with the phenomena of memory-lapses and forgetfulness, and here Schopenhauer has some pointed things to say. He suggests, for instance, that we are too much inclined to treat all cases of our not remembering things which have happened to us or which we have done as purely intellectual failures, and to overlook the fact that there may be very strong *inducements* to forgetting, especially where what is not recalled was of an unpleasant or humiliating character. He claims, too, that whereas it is a sign of the 'health of the mind' that unpleasant

as well as pleasant events are remembered, so that they can be 'assimilated by the intellect' and thus 'receive a place in the system of the truths connected with our will and its interests', it sometimes happens on the other hand that 'events or circumstances become for the intellect completely suppressed, because the will cannot endure the sight of them' (III, p. 169). And when such suppression occurs it can lead to a form of madness: 'the man imagines what does not exist', filling in the gaps in his memories with invented episodes and fantasies. From this point of view madness can be seen as a kind of 'lethe of unendurable sufferings . . . the last remedy of harassed nature, i.e. of the will'.

It is impossible, when reading passages like these, not to be reminded of the scepticism with which Freud later approached what he called 'the proud superstructure of the mind'.[1] And the comparison may legitimately be extended, despite the fact that, as Freud himself emphasized, he only read Schopenhauer long after the central ideas of his own theory had been worked out, there being no question of direct influence. Thus both tended to view the deliverances of ordinary consciousness with reserve and suspicion, and to express themselves on this score in highly pictorial terms: Freud's celebrated comparison of the mind to an iceberg may be set beside Schopenhauer's assertion that 'consciousness is the mere surface of our mind, of which, as of the earth, we do not know the inside, but only the crust' (II, p. 328). Again, although the precise status Freud wished to assign to his concept of 'the unconscious' is not entirely clear, he certainly sometimes spoke as if he intended it to be understood as referring to an actual entity or realm inaccessible to any kind of observation and not to be interpreted merely as a kind of theoretical device or *façon de parler*; to this extent it is not perhaps altogether far-fetched to say that his account raises difficulties not unlike some of those we have observed to arise out of Schopenhauer's references to the will in man. In any event, analogies certainly exist between the ways in which Schopenhauer frequently characterizes the will – e.g. as 'blind incessant impulse', 'endless striving', and as 'indestructible' –

1. *Collected Papers*, V, p. 94.

and many of the terms Freud was wont to employ when talking about the nature of the unconscious. But it is possibly in what Schopenhauer wrote about the sexual instinct that the parallel is most immediately striking; the extreme importance he attached to it is not always sufficiently noticed, and recalls in the most vivid manner the Freudian conception of *libido*. Thus he describes the sexual impulse and its satisfaction as 'the focus of the will, its concentration and highest expression' (III, p. 380): next to 'the love of life' it is 'the strongest and most powerful of motives', the goal of an immense amount of human effort and endeavour, and intrudes itself, often in the most devious ways, into all departments of human life – a 'demon that strives to pervert, confuse, and overthrow everything' (ibid., p. 339). Philosophers and theorists of human nature have nearly always turned a blind eye to the true significance of this 'desire of desires', in reality so pervasive and influential; to them (Schopenhauer remarks) his own view would doubtless appear 'too physical, too material', however metaphysical it is at bottom. But the attitude adopted by such writers is just one more example of the innumerable ways in which human beings delude themselves, through idealization and mystification, concerning this fundamental spring of their actions; which none the less keeps 'peeping through' all the veils thrown over it. Our intellects have developed so far, we have so sophisticated ourselves, that we no longer recognize what, when properly approached, is quite obvious; it is for this reason that when the 'great secret of the world' is first explained to us we never fail to be startled by its sheer 'enormity'.

Whatever deficiencies of honesty or insight (or both) previous thinkers may have shown, Schopenhauer himself attacks the neglected topic at considerable length, tracing the sinuous paths, the subtle guises, taken by sexual feeling with an assiduity comparable to that of his admirer Proust, while at the same time (again like Proust) manifesting a complete disbelief in its capacity to reach any kind of final contentment or satisfaction: even the most passionate and dedicated lover is apt to experience an extraordinary disillusionment when he at last arrives at his goal, so that he is left wondering that 'what was

so longingly desired accomplishes nothing more than every other sexual satisfaction' (III, pp. 348–9). Yet this ceases to be a matter for surprise once we prevent ourselves from falsely romanticizing love and look at the sexual drive instead from Schopenhauer's metaphysical standpoint, as 'the most distinct expression of the will'. For then, he claims, we shall be forced to recognize that the perpetual unremitting business of the will so far as human existence is concerned is not with the welfare of the individual *per se*, but solely with the preservation and propagation of the species as a whole. The maintenance of the species is, however, achieved through an appeal to the individual's egoism; an egoism which is to be found concealed at the heart of all sexual passion, and which is capable of deceptively presenting the possession and enjoyment of the loved object as a supreme good, an overwhelmingly precious benefit, to the desiring subject. In this way Schopenhauer is sometimes led to speak of the operations of the will, as manifesting itself in sexual behaviour, in language reminiscent of that used by Hegel when describing the progressive march of events in history; the latter, for instance, referred to the 'cunning of Reason' whereby the petty motives and aims of individual persons were employed as instruments in the accomplishment of Reason's own exalted purposes. But the echo has hollow overtones. For Schopenhauer there was no question of there being a rational plan to which the world conforms; and although he writes on occasions as if the workings of the will, objectifying itself in physical nature, were susceptible to some kind of teleological or quasi-purposive interpretation, such statements – if we accept his repeated affirmations concerning the will's blind and non-rational character – must be understood in a highly qualified sense. The will reveals itself as 'eternal becoming, endless flux', nothing else; no preselected final goal exists which it can be said consciously to have 'in view', and the use of such terms to describe its activity must in consequence be absurd.

Schopenhauer's account of the sexual instinct provides the model according to which he wishes us to look at our lives in general. In the light of it we see how, far from being the self-determining controllers of our own destinies depicted in philo-

sophical mythology, we are really the agents of primal urges of which our bodies themselves are in a way the direct expression: in a manner deliberately harsh and uncompromising he declares that 'teeth, throat, and bowels are objectified hunger; the genitals are objectified sexual desire; the grasping hands, the hurrying feet, correspond to the more indirect strivings of the will which they represent' (I, p. 141). From such considerations Schopenhauer derives his bleak and pessimistic conception of human existence. Confined within the constricting forms of the *principium individuationis*, so that he appears to himself to be sharply separated from the people and things surrounding him, each man is also impelled relentlessly and unceasingly forward by the fundamental drives of self-preservation and reproduction. Thus he pursues his lonely and restless course, on the one hand seeking protection against the dangers that beset him on every side, on the other trying to fulfil his ever-pressing needs and to gratify his desires, and conscious all the time that in the end everything will be brought to a conclusion by death, 'the total, inevitable, and irremediable shipwreck': it is as if he were forever blowing a soap-bubble, making it as large and long as possible but knowing all the while it is bound to burst. Schopenhauer does not deny that pleasure, as well as suffering, sometimes occurs, but claims that its nature has been misunderstood by philosophical hedonists, who, while elevating it to the status of being the sole true end of human endeavour, have at the same time seen fit to treat it as if it were no more than a kind of simple unanalysable feeling, a 'neat' sensation; on this topic his ideas may once again be seen to have affinities with those of Freud.[1] For Schopenhauer, both suffering and pleasure (in the ordinary sense) are at root 'affections of the will', the former being experienced mainly when the will is 'crossed' and we are in some respect frustrated or deprived, the latter when some specific desire or urge is gratified, the accompanying tension being removed. Nor is it legitimate to suppose that the satisfaction of particular desires brings happiness in its train or can be equated with it: there is still the sinister

1. See e.g. P. Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist*, London, 1959, pp. 325–7.

phenomenon of 'ennui' (*Langeweile*) to be reckoned with. Ennui occurs precisely at the point at which a man has what he previously desired and when he seems free from want or care, and it signifies perhaps more distinctly than anything else the futility of human life. For, having gained all that he thought he wanted, he feels in the most acute form the 'burden of existence' and is overcome by a sense of desolation and emptiness; and from this, itself just as painful and oppressive as the feeling of positive desire, he is liable to seek relief in the performance of gratuitously cruel or destructive acts. Out of such attempts at liberation some of the worst crimes and excesses of which humanity is capable have sprung; for it is only too common for people wilfully to cause misery and anguish to their fellows as a distraction from the bitter discontent they bear within their own hearts.

All in all, and whatever the motivation, it can be affirmed without question that 'the chief source of the serious evils which affect men is man himself: *homo homini lupus*'; and in order to support the contention that one man must be 'the devil of another' Schopenhauer cites numerous examples of human cruelty and injustice, some of which remind one of Hobbes's descriptions of humanity in its 'natural state', while others are more in accordance with the picture Marx and Engels drew when stigmatizing the wrongs of nineteenth-century capitalist society – 'to enter a cotton-spinning factory at the age of five . . . and from then on to sit there daily first ten, then twelve, and ultimately fourteen hours, doing the same mechanical work, is to purchase dearly the satisfaction of drawing breath' (III, p. 389). But despite his vigorous and creditable condemnation of economic oppression and exploitation, Schopenhauer (unlike Marx) drew no reformist or revolutionary morals; radical changes in the social structure would have only given human greed and egoism the opportunity to manifest itself in new and possibly even more fearful forms. It is, in other words, futile and useless to seek to throw the responsibility for the evil state of things upon systems or institutions; life as we find it is nothing but the reflection of our own nature, and in this sense it can be said that the world is the tribunal of the world; if men

were in general not so worthless, their fate as a whole would not be so sad (I, p. 454). Thomas Mann remarked that, when Schopenhauer was describing what he conceived to be the full horror of the human condition, his literary genius attained 'the most brilliant and icy peak of its perfection'. Certainly his detailed analysis of human vice and folly and of the miseries that inexorably result from these has a heightened, obsessional, almost sadistic quality, as if he were partly luxuriating in the frightfulness of the story he had to tell. Nor, indeed, could anything be further removed from the spirit which animated the optimistic theories of the Enlightenment, the doctrine of the perfectibility of man.

Metaphysicians have sometimes been accused, not without reason, of projecting their ethical ideals, the moral or political attitudes they wish to recommend, into the ultimate structure of reality. In this manner the universe may come to be treated as the source, the authority, from which all moral rules and prescriptions flow; once knowledge of its true nature and significance has been attained we shall come to understand how we should behave, how we should conduct our lives, for it provides us with a touchstone, a sure and final guide. This was not Schopenhauer's way. Although he believed that a comprehension of reality's inner character had certain ethical implications, it was not in the fashion just described. For man, as he never tires of pointing out, expresses in his being the essence of things in general: man in fact is the 'microcosm' who finds the two sides of the world – *will* and *idea* – united within himself, and what constitutes his own inner being is also the inner being of the whole world, the 'macrocosm' (I, p. 212). But if so, reality as a whole must share the same terrible character Schopenhauer ascribes to human life itself. Looked at from this point of view, man is in the most intimate sense one with nature: he cannot be divorced, isolated, from the realm of which he is an integral part, whether the attempt so to separate him takes the form of trying to prove that he is a non-extended Cartesian soul or some other shape. But the 'nature' to which he is thus held to belong is not (at least when approached from a 'metaphysical' standpoint) the 'external', material, mechanically-

ordered system natural science represents it to be. On the contrary, when considered at the deepest level, it embodies and reflects in all its parts the pervasive characteristics Schopenhauer has declared to be intrinsic to human existence in general, manifesting everywhere and always the operations of the same ceaseless 'untiring' will. This is the great 'extension' of the notion of *will* upon which Schopenhauer laid such stress, an extension which, as he himself here admits, takes us a long way from any normal interpretation of the concept, but which is not for that reason unjustified. For it enables us, among other things, to exhibit those mysterious 'natural forces', previously shown to be opaque to purely scientific modes of comprehension, in a light which illuminates them as being different 'grades of objectification' of what is essentially the same unchanging agency. He who realizes this will see, not only in the behaviour of 'higher' things obviously similar to himself ('man and animals'), but also in the germination and growth of plants, in the phenomena of crystallization, in the 'longing' (*Sehnsucht*) with which the iron flies to the magnet, in the eagerness with which the poles of the electric current strive for 're-union', the workings of that identical inner nature 'which is directly known to him so intimately and so much better than anything else' (I, p. 142).

In depicting the entire natural domain as a kind of gigantic image of human nature, Schopenhauer makes a liberal use of activistic figures and terms; words like 'strife', 'struggle', 'effort', 'obstacle', and so forth abound in the extraordinary description he offers of the world as a seething, eruptive turmoil of pullulating and mutually antagonistic elements, whose surface or phenomenal manifestations science may accurately chart and subsume beneath tidy mechanistic categories and schemes, but to whose true import it always remains blind. At every stage he portrays the will – which, though 'originally' a simple undivided unity, is broken up under the forms of the *principium individuationis* into an immense diversity and multiplicity of particular phenomena – as striving against itself in perpetual and destructive conflict. This eternal and unending 'struggle for existence' is to be found exemplified, not merely

in the animal kingdom, but in the vegetable world and in the sphere of inanimate things as well; whatever else may be said about his procedure, Schopenhauer certainly shows considerable ingenuity in redescribing occurrences drawn from apparently unpromising fields so as to present them as illustrations of his central thesis, the thesis that 'the will must live on itself, for there exists nothing beside it, and it is a hungry will' (I, p. 201).

How should this fantastic and in many ways repellent picture of the world be assessed? Plainly it does not, nor (to be fair to him) would Schopenhauer have claimed that it does, represent a 'theory' in any of the more usual senses of the term. In one way Schopenhauer has not drawn attention to anything we did not know before; he has not added to our stock of empirical knowledge, his statements about the will are not descriptive of anything analogous to a straightforward factual discovery. What then has he done? In trying to answer this question we might follow up a suggestion of his own, the suggestion he put forward in various places when he spoke of 'deciphering' the world. For, whatever exactly he may have meant by this, we could interpret such deciphering as consisting partly in the bringing to light of certain generally undiscerned patterns in our experience, in the selecting and emphasizing of similarities and continuities between different types and spheres of phenomena which find no recognition in our ordinary ways of looking at things and which our conceptual schemes tend – for various 'practical' reasons – to obscure and obliterate. A comparison that comes to mind here, one towards which we may suppose that Schopenhauer himself would not have been unsympathetic, is with artistic activity. In the pictures of certain expressionist painters (van Gogh in his later work is an example) the world indeed often seems to be presented as if it were charged with a sort of boundless natural energy, as if permeated by a pulsating life and force not altogether unlike that implicit in Schopenhauer's conception of the will; so portrayed, it appears in a form which, though remote from more comfortable everyday ideas of a well-regulated universe populated by firmly-articulated physical objects, may at the same time – to some eyes, in some moods – seem both compelling and authentic.

In Schopenhauer's case the vision he wished to convey is largely expressed by putting familiar concepts to new and vastly extended uses, thereby challenging and disrupting the categories and distinctions in terms of which we are accustomed to comprehend our experience. That this should have appeared to him to be a feasible enterprise at all, given his particular theory of knowledge and of the conditions governing human perception, is a question that does not at the moment concern us. That he should have presented and described the world in the specific fashion he did was no doubt partly a matter of individual temperament or pathology. Partly but not, I think, wholly or exclusively. It is not, for instance, without significance that some of his most emphatic and uncompromising pronouncements on what he holds to be the limitations of the 'mechanical and atomistic view of nature' occur in places where he is discussing biological phenomena. Particularly in his later writings, he castigates all attempts to reduce 'vital force' to chemical or molecular forces, and repudiates the suggestion that the patterns of organization and behaviour peculiar to living things are explicable purely according to the model of 'thrust and counter-thrust' (III, p. 63). It is a mistake to rely blindly upon the operations of efficient causality when interpreting what occurs in this area; as we have seen, Schopenhauer thought that teleological and functional notions (when cautiously handled) can play an essential part in the interpretation of biological processes and events. It is not merely that when we wish to understand the workings of instinct in say insects and animals it is necessary to see how particular instincts subserve such 'ends' as the survival of the organism or the maintenance of the species: similar considerations apply when the question is one of accounting for the various relations which hold between the inner components and organs of living phenomena. Thus we can hardly deny that it contributes, for example, to our understanding of the workings of the body to be told that the blood goes to the lungs for oxidation and flows back again in order to provide nourishment (III, p. 85); although Schopenhauer once again makes it emphatically evident that in recognizing the validity of such

explanations he does not consider himself committed to any assumptions (theological or otherwise) regarding the existence of a principle of conscious design mysteriously underlying natural occurrences.

Now whatever theoretical problems such claims may be thought to raise (and, apart from anything else, they are certainly not easy to square with the contentions put forward in other places concerning the character of scientific explanation in general), Schopenhauer's remarks in this context do at least have a certain historical interest. For in some respects they foreshadow the confused 'mechanist–vitalist' controversy, regarding the proper methods and categories of biological inquiry, which occupied a host of methodologists during the later decades of the century; a controversy which can perhaps still be said to survive – though in a very different form – in present-day disagreements about the feasibility of trying to explain biological phenomena, and to formulate laws governing such phenomena, in purely physico-chemical terms. Nor is this aspect of his theory unrelated to the more central point, referred to earlier in the present chapter, that many of his cardinal ideas sprang from a deeprooted distrust of the models according to which previous philosophers had drawn up their diagrams of human nature. To him, as to a number of other theorists ranging from Herder in the eighteenth century to Bergson and Guyau towards the end of the nineteenth, it seemed that these philosophers had – in one way or another – tried to apply artificial classifications and 'dead' formulae of succession or concomitance to the discussion of every dimension of human personality, every layer of human existence as it is lived and experienced. Something universal and pervasive was thereby lost, cut off from view; something to which a clue may be found in the direct primitive sense we have of ourselves as self-moving agents. 'In the act of will proper,' Schopenhauer wrote, we reach 'the most distinct consciousness of our own self' (III, p. 128); and it is through such awareness of being dynamic, continuously active participants in the world, with all that this implies, that we can attain to the realization of our being at the same time inseparably involved in a single, surging,

all-engulfing 'flux' or process. Our everyday categories of perception and of reason, our common sense and scientific modes of explanation, themselves belong to and are resultants of that process; for this very reason they can afford us no means of grasping and penetrating its inner side or essence. If we are to achieve any true insight into it, we should first and foremost look to ourselves and – unbemused by preconceptions deriving from other spheres of inquiry – patiently seek to elucidate our own natures, the inward significance of our lives.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Nature of Art

SCHOPENHAUER's pessimistic description of the world, his reflections on the emptiness and worthlessness of life, his denigratory account of the ends and purposes human beings pursue, and his exposure of the manner in which they tend to justify their activities, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others – all these prepare the way for his theory of art and of the place of the aesthetic consciousness in the realm of experience. The position he accorded it was in fact one of the greatest importance. Schopenhauer was very far from regarding art as playing a merely ornamental role in the life of the mind; he did not think of it as being simply a kind of luxury-product of civilized societies, possessing no real intellectual interest or significance and unworthy of serious philosophical scrutiny. Such a view of its status had not been uncommon among philosophers writing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when developments in other fields had supplied metaphysical inquiry and speculation with their main materials and models; as a result, artistic matters had for the most part been extended only a somewhat supercilious or cursory treatment. In the succeeding century the attitude was different, and Schopenhauer was certainly not alone in attempting to redress the balance by assigning to art a pre-eminent place in his system. Nevertheless, the dedicated, almost passionate, tone in which he discusses the subject, the interest of some of his ideas, and the considerable influence and reputation his views attained after his death are factors which give his aesthetic theory a special claim to consideration.

The Standpoint of Art

I have already sufficiently emphasized the lengths to which Schopenhauer was prepared to go in stressing the limitations inherent in our ordinary understanding of the world. Science,

from which we might expect to gain some insight and illumination, has been shown to be no more than the slave of the will; the scientific picture of the world has grown up solely in response to the exigencies and necessities of practical life, and consequently has to do with nothing beyond the bare surface of things. And when we turn our attention to thought and knowledge at the level of ordinary common sense, we find the same essential superficiality; for once again these simply serve to assist us in attaining the objects which will temporarily satisfy our needs, desires, and appetites. It would appear, then, that we are eternally held captive, with no possibility of escape, within the restrictive forms of the principle of sufficient reason which have been described as defining our very nature as cognitive beings. It emerges now, however, that this is not entirely the case; and to see why it is not, Schopenhauer maintains, involves a proper appreciation of the role and meaning of artistic experience.

At the end of the last chapter it was suggested that one might not be altogether misrepresenting Schopenhauer's intentions if one looked at his general philosophical interpretation of the world in the light of an analogy drawn with certain forms of artistic expression. Such an approach gains support from a number of observations on the relations between art and philosophy which are to be found scattered throughout his writings. Although, for reasons which will shortly become apparent, he did not wish to equate the two or to treat the second as a mere species of the first, he believed that important similarities exist between the attitude of the philosopher who is true to his vocation and the standpoint of the genuine artist: 'the high calling of both of these has its root in the reflectiveness which primarily springs from the distinctness with which they are conscious of the world and of themselves' (III, p. 147). Common to each is a certain emancipation from the trammels of everyday existence and from the modes of thought and awareness which are inseparably part of such existence. It is this that enables them to 'stand back', so to speak, from experience and from the complex scheme of relations which in the ordinary way determine its structure for us, thereby

achieving a type of apprehension so remote from the customary one that attempts to communicate its content may in some instances initially meet with blank incomprehension or utter astonishment; an essential attribute of the great artist or philosopher consists indeed in the fact that 'he cannot go hand in hand with the existing regular culture of his age, but flings his works far out on the way in front . . .' (III, p. 157). And it is this same detachment, this 'freedom from the aims of the will', which also gives rise to that characteristic attitude of 'wonder' at life and the world found at the basis of all true works of art and metaphysics alike; an attitude it is important to distinguish from the quite separate phenomenon of 'interested' curiosity. For the latter, unlike the former, belongs to 'will-governed' everyday existence, and it is something into which what may well begin as genuine and disinterested perplexity concerning the nature of things all too easily degenerates; for example, contemplation of the fact of death tends quickly to lead to a restless search after comforting anodynes in the form of religious or metaphysical doctrines guaranteeing personal immortality.

Yet when this has been said, there none the less remain salient differences between art and philosophy. The philosopher's aim should be to provide a comprehensive and as far as possible *complete* account of the world, to delineate its innermost character or essence when it is viewed *as a whole*. Furthermore, although what he says will in the first place spring from a vision of things, a 'perceptive apprehension', which presents the worn and familiar scene under an entirely fresh aspect, he must distil his discoveries in a form whereby they can become 'a firm and abiding possession' of the human mind. Thus it is requisite that they should be laid out and articulated in the reasoned and systematic language of 'reflection': philosophy is the 'complete and accurate repetition or expression of the essence of the world in very general concepts, for only in these is it possible to get a view of that whole essence which will everywhere be adequate and applicable' (I, p. 342). The same considerations do not, however, apply to art. To begin with, the arts 'speak only the naïve and childlike

language of perception, not the abstract and serious language of *reflection*'; they therefore tend to give us fragmentary glimpses only; a 'fleeting image' of some part of reality; an example, not the whole (III, pp. 176–7). Again, it is argued that in art 'all truth is certainly contained', but only implicitly or *virtualiter*; and in this respect, too, it is held to differ from philosophy, where an attempt is made to present the ultimate nature of the world in an explicit or direct form. Finally, and here we reach the keystone of Schopenhauer's conception of artistic apprehension, it is claimed that the true objects of aesthetic perception are what he calls the 'Ideas' – that is to say, 'the permanent essential forms of the world and all its phenomena'. But these, it is necessary to insist, cannot themselves be equated with the actual inner nature of reality in the sense in which philosophy seeks to comprehend it; they are not identical with the essence of the world, but (as we shall see) have an independent status.

The manner in which Schopenhauer puts forward these different characterizations of art is not untypical of his general procedure. He often showed himself ready to set down and develop his thoughts on different aspects of a subject as they immediately occurred to him, without bothering overmuch about the question of their interrelations and connexions, or even of their final compatibility. But from what has so far been maintained it emerges at least that he thought of art as being essentially cognitive. The belief that artistic works have a purely 'emotive' function or value, and that if they are to be prized at all it can only be on the ground that they serve to stimulate or evoke certain agreeable or pleasurable feelings in those who contemplate them, was wholly foreign to his thinking on the matter. Art is above all a form of knowledge: as he put it, 'its one source is the knowledge of the Ideas, its one aim the communication of this knowledge' (I, p. 239). And, if this is so, two problems immediately present themselves; one (to employ Schopenhauer's terminology) arising from the side of the subject, the other arising from the side of the object. Following the course of his exposition, we will start with the first.

Briefly, the difficulty here is this. If the 'knowing individual' is as Schopenhauer has described him, if he is equipped with an intellect whose sole function is to serve the will by comprehending reality under the system of relations definitive of the world considered as idea, how is it now possible for Schopenhauer to ascribe to him some other and quite different cognitive capacity, which transcends all ordinary forms of knowledge and which is unmediated by the principles in terms of which such forms of knowledge proceed? Does not such an ascription contradict the very conception of the subject of knowledge as identified and explained in the course of his original epistemological analysis?

Schopenhauer's answer is, quite simply, that it does; but that this admission, surprising as it may at first sight appear, in no wise affects the validity of his general position or reasoning. On the contrary, it represents an idea that is integral to his entire system. The knowing subject, considered from the standpoint of artistic experience and awareness, cannot be described in the same terms as the knowing subject with which he has dealt in his earlier discussions of common sense and scientific knowledge; in the case of art the subject of knowledge must be understood to have undergone a change, a transformation. Thus he claims that

> if it is possible for us to raise ourselves from the knowledge of particular things to that of the Ideas, this can only happen by an alteration taking place in the subject which is analogous and corresponds to the great change of the whole nature of the object, and by virtue of which the subject, so far as it knows an Idea, is no longer an individual. (I, p. 228)

By way of explaining what he has in mind here, Schopenhauer specifically contrasts the aesthetic attitude towards experience with the scientific. The latter looks as it were 'through' objects to their possible uses and effects: attention is focused upon particular points, causal properties and relations are sought and checked, hypotheses are constructed and tested, temporal and spatial positions are charted, solely and exclusively from this constant unchanging point of view. It is a feature

of the aesthetic consciousness, on the other hand, that such an approach is altogether absent from it; a man 'ceases to consider the where, the when, the why, and the whither of things, and looks simply and solely at the *what*' (I, p. 231). Furthermore, it is essential to the type of experience Schopenhauer is now considering that the subject should not look out upon the world through the spectacles of pre-existent concepts, those instruments of reason originally forged and subsequently utilized in the practical interests of the will. Instead, the whole 'power of his mind' must be given up to *perception*; he must 'sink himself' in this, so that 'his whole consciousness [is] filled with the quiet contemplation of the natural object actually present' – landscape, tree, human figure, or whatever else it may be that he is looking at. In so far as he achieves this state, he may be said to *lose himself* in the object of his contemplation; he forgets 'his individuality, his will, and only continues to exist as pure subject, as clear mirror of the object', so that in describing his experience it is no longer possible to distinguish clearly between the perceiver and his perception; one wishes instead to say that 'both have become one, since the entire consciousness is filled and occupied with a single perceptual image (*einem einzigen anschaulichen Bilde*)'. In this connexion Schopenhauer recalls an observation of Spinoza's, namely that 'the mind is eternal in so far as it conceives things under the form of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis*);[1] for one involved in artistic contemplation of the world, the notions of space and time seem to lose all their ordinary meaning, and the conception a man normally has of himself as an active individual, set over against other objects which he regards from the point of view of their actual or possible relations to his own desires or aversions, no longer appears to be in any way applicable. Hence a distinction may be drawn between 'the knowing individual as such' and 'the pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge' of aesthetic perception. The former, together with 'the particular things known by him', are always 'in a particular place, at a particular time, and are links in the chain of causes and effects'; the latter, and its correlate the

1. *Ethics*, V, prop. 31, schol.

'Idea', have by contrast 'passed out of all these forms of the principle of sufficient reason' (I, p. 232) and cannot intelligibly be described in terms of them.

Schopenhauer further elaborates his doctrine of the aesthetic consciousness when he comes to characterize what he calls 'the man of genius'. The ordinary person is, for most of the time at any rate, incapable of purely contemplative awareness of the world. Hedged in by his own concerns, the prisoner of his own 'subjectivity', bound to the familiar tracks of thought which are the expression of his own 'willing' nature, it is typical of him that when he sees anything he 'hastily seeks . . . the concept under which it can be brought, as a lazy man seeks a chair, and then it interests him no further' (I, pp. 242–3). But to look at objects in this manner, simply as instances of familiar concepts, is to adhere to principles of selection and comparison established solely with an eye to convenience or utility; in consequence, everything is distorted, adulterated – 'in the mind of a man who is filled with his own aims, the world appears as a beautiful landscape appears on the plan of a battlefield' (III, p. 145). The outlook of the artistic genius, however, is of quite another order. Since he is uniquely endowed with 'the faculty of continuing in the state of pure perception', enlisting in the service of such perception intellectual resources normally harnessed to the service of the will, his mind is able to 'move freely' over whatever is presented to it, and thus to achieve an 'objective' apprehension of things unavailable to those whose sole reaction to what they perceive consists in raising questions about its possible uses or consequences or effects; through such total estrangement from the mental attitude characteristic of most of us nearly all the time, it is possible for him to reach a condition of undisturbed concentration wherein 'the most ordinary objects appear completely new and unfamiliar' (*Parerga*, II, p. 81), and moreover to do so for a sufficiently long period to make it possible for him to 'reproduce by deliberate art what has thus been apprehended'. At the same time Schopenhauer emphatically denies that the capacities attributable to genius are ones that any man of talent and pertinacity could acquire; it would be absurd, for instance,

to say that what the genius achieves is 'difficult', for this would suggest that it is something quite a number of people could achieve by dint of sheer hard work and application, whereas the truth is that 'it is not in our power at all'. The same point is stressed again and again in different places. Genius is of its essence something inborn and rare, the possession of the very few, and the distinction between the man of genius and the man of mere talent is absolute: 'the man of talent is like the marksman who hits a mark the others cannot hit, the man of genius like the marksman who hits a mark they cannot even see to' (III, p. 158). Nor should we identify imagination with genius. It is tempting to do so, for the first is certainly a necessary condition of the possession of the second, in that it is capable of extending a man's intellectual horizon beyond the limits of his personal experience, and that is indispensable to all true artistic conception and creation. But it can also function in quite a different way; as a means, for instance, of gratifying egoistical and sensual wishes in the form of private fantasies and escapist daydreams. It is, indeed, just such a role that it plays in the case of bad or indifferent novels of the kind to which the general public is so addicted, where the reader, by identifying himself with the hero, attains a vicarious satisfaction or excitement agreeable to his will.

Whatever resemblances there may be in other respects between their ideas, concerning art Schopenhauer's views diverge widely from those suggested by some (at any rate) of Freud's observations on the subject. Freud's claim that art may shed light on areas of our psychic life to which the ordinary man is blind is admittedly in line with much that Schopenhauer wrote regarding the role of genius in artistic activity. On the other hand, Freud's assertion that 'in art alone it still happens that man, consumed by his wishes, produces something similar to the gratification of these wishes, and this playing, thanks to artistic illusion, calls forth effects as if it were something real'[1] would have seemed to Schopenhauer applicable only to unworthy or surrogate artistic productions. To think of genuine artistic creation in these terms would be to do violence to the

1. *Totem and Taboo* (Pelican edition), p. 126.

whole concept of art, as well as fundamentally to misapprehend the unique quality of aesthetic experience. There can be no question, Schopenhauer holds, of the artist's representing objects or experiences as some form of self-gratification or with a view to titillating or gratifying the desires of others; such an idea makes nonsense of the notion of aesthetic awareness, which implies the attainment of a state of mind wherein we may be said to 'keep the sabbath of the penal servitude of willing' (I, p. 254). For this reason certain paintings, rightly called 'charming' or 'attractive', nevertheless definitely fail as works of art precisely because such epithets so accurately describe them. Schopenhauer mentions, for instance, certain Dutch still-lifes of food and drink which, through the *trompe-l'œil* effects they undoubtedly achieve, oblige us to see the things depicted as desirable objects of consumption and hence, by exciting appetite, 'put an end to all aesthetic contemplation of the object'. And exactly the same considerations apply when nude forms are presented in a way that stirs sexual feelings in the beholder, a 'fault' rarely found is classical painting and sculpture. Again, pictures or books which by their mode of treating certain subjects evoke repulsion or disgust are equally inadmissible from an aesthetic point of view; for here too the will is affected, although in the opposite way.

Schopenhauer thinks that the quality of 'will-lessness' intrinsic to aesthetic contemplation is also characteristic of some kinds of memory-experience: such experiences interested him, as they were later to fascinate Proust. Thus he asks why it is that particular sections or moments of our lives, recovered and recalled from the long-distant past, often come back to us in so strange and enchanted a light and under an aspect quite different from that under which they appeared to us at the time. The explanation is that when we remember such events it is only the 'objective' content of what was originally experienced that returns to us; the 'individually subjective' accompaniment, in the shape of anxieties and desires that distorted our apprehension and wrecked our enjoyment, is forgotten and absent. Hence the illusion arises that the scenes and happenings of which we were then conscious lay before us in as pure

and undisturbed a form as their images stand before us now in recollection, so that far-off days appear to the eyes of memory as fragments of a 'lost paradise'. The release from the subjective wants and cares, which in the case of memory we wrongly suppose ourselves to have enjoyed at other times by transferring to the past our present detachment from the interests that then occupied us, is in the case of aesthetic contemplation a present though transitory reality. At one point (*Parerga*, II, p. 447) Schopenhauer even suggests that the main problem of philosophical aesthetics lies in the question of how it is possible to find satisfaction in something that bears no relation to our will, claiming that the question is answered once it is realized that aesthetic satisfaction consists precisely *in* the absence of all willing. Elsewhere, however, he supplements this negative characterization with the consideration that aesthetic enjoyment also necessarily depends upon the nature of what is apprehended or perceived; a qualification clearly essential if his account is to have any plausibility.

Much that Schopenhauer has to say about artistic awareness is reminiscent of ideas put forward previously by Kant in his *Critique of Judgement*; indeed, he himself allows that Kant has rendered a 'great and permanent service to the philosophical consideration of art' (II, p. 152), despite his having in fact had 'little susceptibility for the beautiful' – a criticism which perhaps partly accounts for the comparatively slight specific references Schopenhauer makes to the third *Critique* in his own work on the subject. Thus Kant had insisted that a detachment from all desire or practical interest is an essential feature of the aesthetic frame of mind or attitude, and had maintained that such detachment is reflected in all judgements of taste or artistic appreciation; in viewing or contemplating a thing as beautiful we are necessarily indifferent to the question of how that thing touches or could be connected with particular human wants or needs, whether our own or those of others: we are not, for instance, concerned with it as a possible object of possession or consumption. Hence Kant wrote that everyone 'must allow that a judgement on the beautiful which is tinged with the slightest interest is very partial and not a pure judge-

ment of taste':[1] taste in the beautiful is in fact the 'only disinterested and *free* delight', since 'with it, no interest, whether of sense or reason, extorts approval'; and therefore *favour* (or 'free liking'), as contrasted with *inclination* or *respect*, is the appropriate concept in terms of which to describe and understand the pleasure we take in beautiful objects and works of art.[2] It follows that, at least so far as the 'pure' judgement of taste is concerned, considerations of utility are irrelevant; for such a judgement is said to combine 'delight or aversion immediately with the bare *contemplation* of the object irrespective of its use or of any end'.[3] Closely connected with this point is the emphasis Kant lays upon the universal and impersonal character of aesthetic appreciation. It is not as referring to the way in which a particular object strikes *me*, considered as an individual person with certain specific likings and aims, that I am entitled to ascribe aesthetic value to that object; where the pleasure is aesthetic, or is claimed to be such, a man 'can find as reason for his delight no personal conditions to which his own subjective self might alone be party'.[4] Thus a man's pleasure in a picture may be wholly dependent upon its being among his possessions, or again upon its reminding him of some incident in his personal history which he likes to remember. If so, his enjoyment derives purely from the especial relation in which he stands to it, a relation others do not, and in some cases could not, share; on this account he is necessarily precluded from claiming that his satisfaction is of an aesthetic kind. For, on Kant's view, a judgement that something is beautiful must always be interpreted as involving a reference to the appropriate reactions and feelings of *anybody* to whom the thing in question is presented; it contains an implicit demand upon the agreement or assent of 'every subject'.

When Schopenhauer speaks of the withdrawal of the will and of the submergence of individuality as being essential to the realization of aesthetic experience, we may reasonably suppose him to have been influenced by ideas of the sort just mentioned. At the same time it would be incorrect to treat his

1. *Critique of Judgement*, tr. J. C. Meredith, p. 43.
2. ibid., p. 49. 3. ibid., p. 87. 4. ibid., p. 51.

own theory merely as a kind of re-statement of the Kantian position in more romantic language and imagery. In passages like the ones referred to, Kant was chiefly occupied with the relatively restricted problem of determining the status of aesthetic judgements (as expressed in certain distinctive types of proposition) and of eliciting their basis or ground; this ground, he suggested, was primarily to be located in our shared capacity for responding to the unity and design discernible in presented wholes, and in our ability to take pleasure in things (whether natural objects or works of art) in so far as they are recognized to give rise to the harmonious interplay of the faculties of understanding and imagination within the consciousness of the perceiving subject. By putting forward such an interpretation he certainly intended to draw a sharp line between aesthetic awareness and our ordinary or scientific knowledge of empirical fact, in which the data of sense-experience are subsumed and organized beneath determinate concepts. He did not, however, present this distinction as if it concerned two rival forms of cognition, one of which was inherently superior to the other; it would be truer to say that he did not regard the aesthetic consciousness as a source of objective knowledge at all: 'the judgement of taste . . . is not a cognitive judgement . . . but is aesthetic – which means that it is one whose determining ground *cannot be other than subjective*'.[1] By contrast Schopenhauer was, as we have already seen, committed to the view that aesthetic awareness does constitute knowledge, such knowledge affording an insight into reality of a higher order than that available to scientific inquiry. Further, the notion of disinterested contemplation acquires in his hands a wider significance than that accorded to it by Kant. Not only does it involve the actual sloughing off of all ordinary forms of interpreting the world, in a manner that presupposes a radical change in the conception of the knowing subject; he also treats the aesthetic consciousness as possessing an especial value, evident to anyone who accepts the general implications of his philosophical theory, in virtue of the temporary release it offers from the bondage to the will. The supreme illustration

1. *Critique of Judgement*, tr. J. C. Meredith, pp. 41–2.

of this is to be found in the experience of the *sublime*. For here a man is conscious of objects or events which stand in a 'hostile' relation to his will and which in the normal way would inspire intense fear; yet he is able, 'through a free and conscious transcendence of the will and the knowledge relating to it', to contemplate them in complete calm, 'raised above himself, his person, his willing, and all willing' (I, p. 261).

To contemporary eyes Schopenhauer's comparisons between science and art, always made with a view to exposing the deficiencies of the former, may appear to be a variation on a too familiar theme: metaphysical systems of all times have tended to embody comprehensive preferences, as if entirely different forms of human inquiry and activity could be graded and 'awarded marks' according to some common scale, and Schopenhauer's theory is no exception. But a difficulty more immediately pertinent to the present context arises from his apparent readiness to assign to artistic awareness a role similar to the role accorded by some other philosophers to supra-sensuous knowledge, or 'intuition': can he not therefore be accused of introducing into his own system a type of doctrine upon which he had no hesitation in heaping ridicule when he found it expressed elsewhere? To this he might have replied that he was appealing to a kind of experience not only perfectly intelligible in itself, but also capable, through the medium of actual works of art, of being effectively and precisely communicated; in the case of the 'intuitionists', on the other hand, the postulated modes of cognition satisfied neither of these conditions. For Schopenhauer certainly thought of the creative artist as a man endowed not merely with a gift for grasping the true character of things, but with a further capacity for embodying in concrete form the contents of his vision so that they could be perceived by others; through repeating in a 'voluntary and intentional work' what he has seen, the artist enables us to look into the world through his eyes (I, p. 252). Thus he did not on the whole subscribe to the implausible thesis – seemingly maintained by some Idealist philosophers of art – that what is intrinsic to artistic genius lies simply in the capacity for having revelatory experiences or performing 'inner acts of the

imagination', the ability to convey these being an unimportant or subsidiary matter. He believed that the artist must also, to deserve the name, be equipped with the power to express convincingly and communicate 'externally' the nature of his perceptions.

Even so, I think that Schopenhauer did tend to overstress the cleavage between original apprehension or vision on the one side, and its 'material' embodiment in works of art on the other. A clear-cut separation between the two seems generally artificial and in some cases quite impossible to draw, especially when considered in the light of what a number of artists have said about their method of work. Picasso has been quoted as claiming that he does not envisage in advance what colours to use; and observations by other visual artists could be cited, from which the conclusion to draw would seem to be not that the 'real' content of the picture or sculpture necessarily pre-exists in the artist's mind, waiting to be reproduced on canvas or in stone, but rather that it may only emerge gradually, often through a process of trial and error, in the actual manipulation of the physical medium in which the artist is working. The painter or sculptor conceives and understands in his hands as much as in his head, and for this reason the division of the creative process into two distinct phases or 'moments', one purely contemplative or perceptual, the other primarily executive or 'technical', can be seriously misleading. It is not, however, unintelligible that such an account should have proved attractive. For one thing, it sometimes seems natural to refer to works of art as realizing, or as failing to realize, the effect their creators were trying to achieve, even if this does not in fact always mean that the works in question were intended to represent something that was already 'there', fixed and finished, in the original conception. For another, the 'rightness' or 'inevitability' which often strikes a beholder as characteristic of a completed work of art may lead him to project the experience he has while looking at it into the artist's consciousness prior to its execution. Generally speaking, the tendency in much traditional aesthetics to assimilate questions concerning the complex and mysterious operations of artistic creativity to

questions involving the character and quality of the psychological state occasioned by the perception of beautiful objects seems to be at least as prevalent as the more usually criticized tendency to run together questions of the latter sort with analytical problems about the meaning and import of judgements of taste.

In Schopenhauer's case, the somewhat 'spectatorial' approach he adopted was closely connected with his particular conception of the true objects of aesthetic awareness, which will be discussed in a moment. Moreover, under the influence of current Romanticism, he provided an essentially inspirational interpretation of creative genius, and such an interpretation readily lends itself to expression in terms of the sense of exaltation and heightened perceptual sensitivity that informs certain contemplative states. Nor can it really be doubted that in his tendency to separate the visionary from the executive or active side of artistic achievement, he was partly guided by his desire to preserve art from any fundamental contamination by the will; although here it might be objected that even pure 'contemplation' presumably requires an exercise of will in *some* sense, inasmuch as it involves keeping the attention fixed. Yet such considerations, though responsible for some of the weaknesses in Schopenhauer's account, also led him to bring into prominence factors that had not always been sufficiently recognized. He realized, for instance, that – whatever differences there may otherwise be – important analogies do exist between the respective standpoints and attitudes of the creative artist and the receptive aesthetic beholder. Common to both is a withdrawal from the interests that normally govern the nature and direction of the attention we give to things, and a preparedness to view experience in a manner involving a temporary relinquishment or abdication of our more usual role as practical observers, non-contemplative purposive agents. From this point of view the situation and mental stance of the aesthetic spectator finds its natural counterpart in the frame that surrounds a picture and holds it complete, isolated, and self-sufficient, as something to be looked at in its own right; and the ability to adopt and preserve such an attitude is – it

could be claimed – as much a condition of the creation of works of art as it is of their enjoyment and understanding. For only thus can things, people, situations, life itself, be seen in that 'new way' – independently of the patterns and schemes and set responses of ordinary existence – which Schopenhauer held it to be the function of genuine art to offer. And here, it seems to me, is a point which can be appreciated without necessarily subscribing to all the more mystical and philosophically puzzling ideas in which his account of artistic perception is embedded. It may be tempting, indeed, to treat some of his more bizarre pronouncements as carrying, and as being intended to carry, no more than a metaphorical significance; to regard them as merely adding force to points which without loss of substance or meaning could be re-expressed in a more homely idiom. Yet this is a temptation it would be rash to yield to too wholeheartedly. In the context of a theory of art such as he provides, the line between the figurative and the literal is not so simply drawn; nor, among other things, should it be forgotten that there have been artists and writers, of whom in recent times Paul Klee and Rilke are examples, who have spoken of their work and of their imaginative experiences in language which is often close to that used by Schopenhauer when he wrote, for instance, of forms of consciousness in which the sense of oneself as a persisting separate individual vanishes and where the ordinary distinction between percipient and perceived seems to lose its hold. But however this may be, the kernel of Schopenhauer's account of the artist's approach to the world finds perhaps its most striking echo in the work of a novelist to whom reference has already been made in other connexions, and who expressed in his chief book a view of art and its relation to life in many ways similar to that of the German writer. Thus, towards the end of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Proust observed:

Ce travail de l'artiste, de chercher à apercevoir sous de la matière, sous de l'expérience, sous des mots quelque chose de différent, c'est exactement le travail inverse de celui que, à chaque minute, quand nous vivons détournés de nous-même, l'amour-propre, la passion, l'intelligence et l'habitude aussi accomplissent

en nous, quand elles amassent au-dessus de nos impressions vraies, pour nous les cacher maintenant, les nomenclatures, les buts pratiques que nous appelons faussement la vie. . . . Ce travail qu'avaient fait notre amour-propre, notre passion, notre esprit d'imitation, notre intelligence abstraite, nos habitudes, c'est ce travail que l'art défera, c'est la marche en sens contraire, le retour aux profondeurs, où ce qui a existé réellement gît inconnu de nous qu'il nous fera suivre.[1]

Art and Reality

It is time to take up the other side of Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory and to consider the question, not of the conditions that must obtain subjectively if artistic knowledge is to be possible, but of the objective content of such knowledge. We have seen that he holds all artistic apprehension to be of the 'Ideas' (*Ideen*). That, however, does not take us very far. What is the status of this new category, so suddenly introduced? More particularly, how is it related to the two notions in terms of which (it was originally suggested) the nature of reality could be exhaustively described – the notion of idea or representation (*Vorstellung*) and the notion of will? For Schopenhauer stresses that it is distinct from both of these. The Ideas can be in some sense directly *perceived*, whereas the will, although it is said (sometimes) that we have direct *inward* knowledge of its character, cannot be. On the other hand, the Ideas cannot be equated with the particular things of ordinary sense-perception. The particular empirical object has as its 'correlate' the knowing individual who is subject to the governance of the will, and hence falls under the principle of sufficient reason; the Idea, since it has for correlate not this but the quite different pure knowing subject of the aesthetic consciousness, does not fall under that principle.

As an example of what he has in mind, Schopenhauer asks us to consider the case of looking at a tree.

If I contemplate a tree aesthetically, i.e. with artistic eyes, and thus recognize, not it, but its Idea, it becomes at once of no consequence whether it is this tree or its predecessor which flourished

1. *Le Temps retrouvé*, II, p. 44.

a thousand years ago, and whether the contemplator is this individual or any other who lived anywhere and at any time; the particular thing and the knowing individual are abolished with the principle of sufficient reason, and there remains nothing but the Idea and the pure subject of knowing. . . . And the Idea is free not only from time but also from space; for the Idea is not in truth this spatial form which floats before me, but . . . its pure significance, its innermost being, which discloses itself to me and appeals to me, and which may be quite the same even though the spatial relations of the form be very different. (I, p. 271)

Now implicit in this passage, as in others that could be cited, there is an element of ambiguity that derives to some extent from a lack of clarity in Schopenhauer's original formulation of his principle of sufficient reason in its temporal and spatial applications. For it is one thing to say, as he might at first be understood simply to be saying, that from a specifically aesthetic point of view the spatio-temporal relations in which something stands to other objects and events may be largely *irrelevant*, not a matter of concern. I am not, for example, interested *qua* aesthetic beholder in the questions of when the particular tree I am looking at came into existence, or of its place on the map. I do not regard it as an explorer might regard it; nor do questions of its age and origin concern me, as they might a gardener who wondered whether the time had come for lopping it or cutting it down, or a historian who wished to know whether the particular object confronting him was one that had played an important part in some event – say an escape or an ambush – which had occurred many years previously. But it does not of course follow from this that what is perceived in the aesthetic contemplation of a tree is something *toto genere* different from that which might be observed by a gardener, an explorer, or a historian in the course of their work or investigations, and that, whereas when they look at a tree they see something which can properly be described as occupying a certain spatial area, having such and such dimensions, being so many years old and so forth, the object perceived by the aesthetic contemplator is not describable in these terms. For let it be allowed that two (or more) people with diverse interests,

sensibilities, or aptitudes may look at a given object in widely different ways; let it further be conceded that what they see may present itself to them under very different aspects or even that their respective modes of apprehending or 'experiencing' it may be qualitatively unlike one another: still – it may be objected – that does not mean that they are looking at objectively different things, and at things, moreover, which belong to distinct orders of existence. Yet when Schopenhauer speaks of the 'Ideas' as being, for example, that to which 'strictly speaking, space is as foreign as time' (III, p. 123), it seems that he does wish to maintain some such absolute distinction between the respective objects of aesthetic and non-aesthetic awareness.

As he makes clear, Schopenhauer derived his conception of art as the knowledge of Ideas from Plato, though not from Plato's own aesthetic theory. Plato, in his opinion, had correctly recognized that the world of ordinary sense-experience has no more than a 'relative being'; thus far the Platonic view of everyday empirical knowledge bore a plain resemblance to his own conception of such knowledge as comprehending the world considered as a multiplicity of particular things ordered under the forms of space, time, and causality. Nor was this all. Schopenhauer points out that the Platonic theory involves the claim that the type of knowledge in question does not constitute knowledge of the world as it 'really' is in its innermost nature; Plato speaks, by contrast, of a 'true knowledge' that has as its object a realm of eternal Ideas, these being the permanent unchanging archetypes to which the things of ordinary experience stand as 'mere fleeting shadows'. And this aspect of what Plato says, though inadequate as he states it, can be reformulated in a manner that makes it consonant with Schopenhauer's own theory. The Platonic Ideas do not represent the inner metaphysical essence of the world: for that is the will. They can, however, be interpreted as representing 'the direct objectivity of the will', in a way in which the objects of ordinary sense-perception cannot, the latter being only 'an indirect objectification of the thing-in-itself' (I, p. 227): each Idea represents a distinct stage or 'grade' in the will's

objectification of itself, these grades being 'the original unchanging forms and qualities of all natural bodies, both organic and inorganic, and also the general forces which reveal themselves according to natural laws' (I, p. 219). So conceived, the various Ideas are said to present themselves in 'innumerable individuals and particulars', and to be related to these as 'archetypes to their copies': thus they occupy a curious midway position between the two poles in terms of which Schopenhauer originally characterized reality and our knowledge of it, considerably complicating his account. In ordinary sense-perception it is only the particulars that are apprehended, for here 'the original and essential unity of an Idea is broken up into the plurality of individuals' of which the everyday world is composed; in art, on the other hand, we become conscious of the existence and nature of the Ideas themselves. At the same time, he did not wish to hold that artistic knowledge is wholly independent of normal sense-perception of particular things, and it would have been odd, to put it mildly, if he had done so. Rather his position is (at least so far as the representational arts are concerned) that the artist achieves awareness and comprehension of the Idea *in* and *through* the individual phenomena of everyday experience; thus he claims that it is frequently the practice, in both the pictorial and the literary arts, to take some individual person or thing and to present it to us as a separate entity, 'with all its peculiarities, down to the most trivial, exhibited with the most scrupulous exactness' (*Parerga*, II, p. 453), going on to argue that the aim of this procedure is the revelation of the underlying Idea. The suggestion would, in fact, appear to be that when, for instance, a painter takes as his subject (say) a bowl of fruit, the actual apples, pears, and so on he sees on the table before him serve as a kind of medium through which he contemplates their true essence or form; and that in portraying them pictorially he tries to communicate the inner nature of what he so perceives.

Even so, and despite such qualifications, the view that Schopenhauer seems to be putting forward may strike the reader as highly eccentric. It is surely paradoxical, for example, to suggest that, when we say of a painting that its subject is a

vase of irises, or a group of dancing figures, or a man's face, we do not mean simply that it is a picture of the sort of things we could in the ordinary way see or touch, but that it is also representative of something else as well; namely, a mysterious entity that eludes ordinary perception. For it still remains obscure how the Ideas are supposed to be related to everyday things, and – more specifically – how they are supposed to be portrayed in works of art. When, in the usual way, we speak of one thing's representing another, it could be claimed that we at least imply that it should be in principle possible to compare the representation with that which it is said to portray or exhibit; an architectural model, for instance, can be set beside and compared with the building of which it is the model. But it is not clear what kind of sense can be given to the notion in the case of Schopenhauer's postulated Ideas. Can he, for example, really tell us what he means by them, except by referring us in the end back to the paintings, sculptures, and so forth alleged to exhibit them? And if there is no other, independent, method of pointing them out, the question of making a comparison between them and their artistic portrayals can hardly be said to arise. For this reason alone it may be objected that, even if we allow (as perhaps we must) that concepts like *perception* and *vision* and *truth* have special implications when used within the field of aesthetic criticism and appraisal to characterize works of art, the terms in which Schopenhauer seeks to elucidate these implications are not on the face of it very helpful. Can his employment of such terms be further explained?

Behind Schopenhauer's conception of the true objects of artistic knowledge one can discern the outline of a problem, or rather of a cluster of problems, which since ancient times has occupied men who have speculated and theorized about the arts and which during the nineteenth century presented itself in fresh and arresting forms. For in that century the notion of representation in art, and in particular previous views as to how far and in what way the painter, sculptor, or poet should aim to interpret and transpose the character and quality of perceived reality, became the focus of searching discussion and

criticism, such re-evaluation finding expression in highly original aesthetic doctrines and often stimulating major artistic experiments. Partly as a consequence of these developments, we are today peculiarly conscious of the difficulties surrounding the time-honoured conception of art as the 'imitation of nature', and of the need to draw a line between the sense in which particular works of art may be said to portray aspects of life and experience and the sense in which this may be done by say a photograph, a waxwork in Madame Tussaud's, a police-report, or a psychoanalytical case-history. But it would be absurd to maintain that sensitivity to such distinctions is confined to our own time, as the history of painting alone makes amply plain: and Schopenhauer's very employment of the terminology of 'Platonic Ideas' in order to try to explain the difference between the artist's activity and that of the mere copyist or creator of illusions bears clear points of resemblance to earlier theories. It was, for instance, commonly accepted in the academies from the sixteenth century onwards that it was the task of the painter or sculptor to uncover and articulate the fundamental patterns or forms that manifest themselves in the imperfect sphere of everyday experience, to lay bare the permanent 'real' structure of natural objects, this structure being frequently conceived in quasi-geometrical terms. And the elements of such an approach are certainly discernible in Schopenhauer's discussion of the artistic presentation of the human form, where he attempts, however, to give it a philosophical (or what might be more precisely called a 'transcendental') justification. Thus, in considering the classical ideal of human beauty as expressed in Greek sculpture, he begins by attacking the view that this ideal was arrived at purely 'empirically', that is to say, 'by collecting particular beautiful parts, uncovering and noting here a knee, there an arm' and putting them together in order to construct a beautiful whole. This 'perverse and senseless opinion' – resting as it does upon the naïve belief that the artist is a mere imitator of empirical forms, and in any case failing to explain how he is supposed to recognize a particular *part* of the body as beautiful, so that the problem simply re-emerges at another level – must

be wholly set aside. Instead we should realize that (in this sphere at least) the sculptor to some degree anticipates *a priori* the general type of human beauty, and is thereby able to employ it as a means of interpreting and judging the actual and 'imperfect' human figures with which ordinary sense-perception confronts us: figuratively speaking, he 'understands the half-uttered speech of nature' and 'impresses upon the hard marble the beauty of form which she in a thousand attempts failed to produce' (I, p. 287). Schopenhauer emphasizes, however, that the kind of 'prophetic anticipation of the beautiful' of which he is speaking must by no means be thought of as wholly independent of sense-experience. Both plastic and pictorial art require such experience as providing a 'schema' whereby 'that which is dimly known *a priori* can be called into clear and distinct consciousness, and an intelligent representation of it becomes possible' (I, p. 288). Nor, again, should the *a priori* awareness that is involved here be confounded with our *a priori* consciousness of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason. The latter, as exemplified in scientific knowledge and inquiry, solely concerns the 'how' of appearances – for instance, their causal relations and implications: the former, by contrast, is related, not to the 'how', but to the 'what' of phenomena – in other words, to the underlying 'Ideas' which they manifest or signify.

Now there are no doubt good reasons for protesting against the notion of the artist as a kind of simple recording instrument, photographically reproducing in another medium the data presented to his sensory apparatus: thus far what Schopenhauer says has some force. It also seems reasonable to point out that specific canons of aesthetic excellence – for example, the rules defining the correct proportions of the human body and its various parts – cannot be treated as if they were discoverable purely by carefully examining and comparing the physical attributes of a 'representative selection' of actual human beings. For such an idea, it might be claimed, only appears plausible in so far as we covertly assume the selection in question to have been made according to principles already taken to be valid: we should do better, in fact, frankly to

recognize that formal aesthetic standards are something we bring to, rather than mechanically read off from, examples in nature, and that they largely evolve and achieve general acceptance through the inventions and experiments of creative artists struggling to simplify or impose order upon the chaotic complexities of raw experience; adapting a remark of Blake, we might say that artistic canons 'are not Abstracted or compounded from Nature, but are from the Imagination'. Schopenhauer's references to '*a priori* anticipation' on the part of the artist could perhaps be interpreted as partly making a point of this kind. All the same, the uncomfortable feeling persists that his metaphysical conception of art as consisting in the apprehension of eternal unchanging Ideas is liable to lead in its turn to distortion, and that it may in the end be exposed to objections similar to those which can be brought against crude 'imitationist' theories of the sort he attacks. For, first, it suggests that the 'ideal form' which the artist comprehends and uncovers is something fixed and unalterable, something which, once it has been made manifest to the eyes of ordinary mortals, we cannot fail to recognize as expressing the final unchallengeable truth. But such a view takes no account of surely one of the most palpable features of the history and development of artistic modes of expression and portrayal, namely, the wide divergences apparent between the standards of perfection adopted by men living in separate cultural climates or historical periods. This emerges clearly enough if we consider the profound dissimilarities that may exist between different styles of art in their characteristic methods of representing the same subject. A comparison between the ways in which the nude figure is treated in 'Classical' and 'Gothic' painting and sculpture seems to afford a useful illustration; as Sir Kenneth Clark has pointed out, an artist working early in the fifteenth century may leave us 'in no doubt that he appreciated the classical ideal of physical beauty and could reproduce it if he chose to do so', but that nevertheless he did not so choose and instead 'deliberately created, or adapted, a new feminine shape which was to satisfy northern taste for two hundred years'.[1]

1. Kenneth Clark, *The Nude*, p. 310.

The doctrine, in fact, that there is one 'real model' or 'essential form' discerned by the artist across the deceptive veil of 'appearances' can possibly be chiefly ascribed to the tacit acceptance, through long habituation, of patterns and shapes which upholders of that doctrine had become familiar with and learned to apply from early youth onwards, with the consequence that the idea that there might be other alternative modes of presentation – in their own way equally capable of satisfying or illuminating – was not entertained and seemed indeed to be an impossible one. And such considerations suggest a further difficulty in Schopenhauer's account. A common objection to the thesis that the essential function of art is the faithful imitation of nature is that it is unable to do justice to the notions of originality, individuality, and innovation which (as Kant emphasized) are deeply embedded in the conception of artistic achievement and worth; and as a corrective it has often been thought important to stress the creative character of art, in the face of those who have tended to describe it too exclusively in the language of observation and discovery. Works of art are not – it is claimed – mere vehicles of information, attempts to record what things are like when viewed from some hypothetical 'neutral' standpoint. Now it is perfectly true, as we have noticed, that Schopenhauer speaks of the artist as making it possible for us to see things in a totally unfamiliar way, with 'new eyes' – originality and novelty of vision being treated as necessary attributes of genius. But could it not be argued that in regarding the products of art as essentially renderings of fundamental forms or Ideas, he himself over-emphasizes the purely reproductive side of artistic work, to the neglect of its complementary inventive aspect? And has not what he says the additional disadvantage of appearing to petrify the legitimate forms of creative expression into patterns and standards set by (certain) previous artistic attainments, thus laying stringent limits to the possibility of future developments of style and taste?

There is here, however, a serious danger of forcing Schopenhauer's aesthetic into too narrow a mould. He employed and exploited his conception of the Ideas, as elsewhere he utilized

the notion of the will, with great freedom; and this, though often apt to test the patience of his readers, all the same gives his metaphysic of art a certain richness and depth; it was perhaps on account of its very imprecisions, its evocative inexactitudes, that it appealed to some of the theorists of the Symbolist movement in France in the 1880s, appearing to men like Jean Moréas, Gustave Kahn, and Albert Aurier to afford an appropriate vocabulary in which to propound their views concerning the function and aims of poetry and painting.[1] Thus, to return for a moment to the objections considered at the end of the previous paragraph, it might be claimed that some of his remarks suggest that he wished his conception of the Ideas to be understood as carrying quite different implications from these. One might, for example, interpret him as partly attempting to explain how it is that we are often able to appreciate and respond to connexions or affinities between works painted at periods far removed from one another in time and character: on such an interpretation, it would be possible for the same 'Idea' to find expression in varying stylistic idioms and in terms of widely dissimilar models and techniques, while none the less preserving an identity recognizable to the aesthetic percipient. And however this may be, Schopenhauer on several occasions certainly explicitly rejected the procedure of artists who worked in a spirit of tame conformity to what had gone before: 'they suck their nourishment, like parasite plants, from the works of others, and like polyps they become the colour of their food' (I, p. 304). What such *imitatores* do is to try to fix abstractly, in conceptual terms, the features of genuine works of art which give us aesthetic satisfaction, and then seek to reproduce these same features in their own efforts. But this type of derivative, 'academic', or just fashionable work is ultimately worthless, however much contemporary acclaim it may receive from the public: it should be distinguished from the achievements of the true creative genius, who, though often aided and educated by those who preceded him, receives his first impulse and inspiration

1. In this connexion see, e.g., J. Rewald, *Post-Impressionism from Van Gogh to Gauguin*, especially Ch. III.

from the impressions made upon him by his direct experience of life and the world, and who – for the very reason that he refuses to be the slave of convention and tradition – is only too often spurned by his own age. And Schopenhauer links the distinction just drawn with a general division between the respective roles of the Idea and the concept in aesthetic matters, a division which may be understood as reinforcing his previous assertions concerning the limitations of conceptual thinking. The concept is like a 'dead receptacle' into which whatever has been put can be extracted mechanically by careful analysis and communicated in the form of words: this (it is held) throws light upon what is wrong with the productions of second-rate artists, artists who more often than not 'start from a concept' and who formulate to themselves verbally both what they intend to do and the ways in which they intend to do it, before they set to work. In consequence the impression one has when confronted with their labours is always of something factitious, fraudulent, above all boring – one is aware that the content of their paintings, sculptures, or whatever they may be (which is completely determinate and leaves nothing to the imagination) could as well have been communicated in dry and lifeless concepts, without any loss and with a great deal less trouble. For we are only perfectly satisfied by the impression of a work of art when it leaves behind something which for all our thinking about it we cannot bring down to the distinctness of a concept (III, p. 180). The latter is the case when the work in question springs from and conveys the apprehension of an Idea. The comprehended Idea exhibited by the artist is endowed with a mysterious generative power, a capacity for arousing in the percipient an inexhaustible and continuously unfolding series of significant thoughts and images; in this respect it may be compared to a living organism 'which brings forth what was not put into it'. Thus, although it resembles the concept in that through its expression something universal is communicated, its content is such that it cannot be rendered articulate within the tight limits imposed by verbal formulae; it is 'felt' and intuitively grasped, rather than understood in rational or discursive terms. This explains

why all attempts to *describe*, to put into words, what we learn from the experience of works of art inevitably break down at the crucial point and are hopelessly inadequate: 'the transition from the Idea to the concept is always a fall' (I, p. 307). And it helps to explain, too, why in Schopenhauer's view the artist can be thought of, at least in the early stages of composition, as working almost instinctively; and why he believed that some of the finest achievements of the great masters of painting are to be found among their rapid suggestive sketches rather than among their more complete and worked-over canvases – for the former, having been perfected in the inspiration of their first conception and drawn 'as it were unconsciously', concentrate more directly upon what is essential to their subjects and elicit a correspondingly purer and more fruitful response from the imagination of the beholder. In connexion with what was said earlier, it is perhaps worth noting here that observations reminiscent of these were made by Symbolist writers and painters later in the century: a not untypical example is Dujardin's remark (in an article published in the *Revue Indépendante*, May 1888) that 'scorning photography, the painter will set out to retain, with the smallest possible number of characteristic lines and colours, the intimate reality, the essence of the object he selects'. Even so, it would be as well not to exaggerate the significance of such resemblances, striking though many of them are. On the one hand, the sources of Symbolist ideas were very various, and although Schopenhauer's terminology was often used and his views mentioned, the interpretations put upon his doctrines were sometimes decidedly odd. On the other, he himself was very far from trying to initiate and propagate a revolutionary artistic creed – he did not regard it as lying within the province of a philosopher to attempt such a thing; nor (as he frequently makes clear) had he the slightest intention of denying the validity of works painted in a finished or 'naturalistic' style as such.

A further elaboration of the contrast drawn between the concept and the Idea is to be found in the treatment Schopenhauer accords to 'allegory' in art. The allegorical significance of a painting or piece of sculpture is always what he calls

'nominal', that is to say, it can be expressed 'abstractly' in terms of words or concepts: an allegorical picture representing the 'Genius of Fame' in the shape of a winged horse surrounded by beautiful boys may, *qua* allegory, produce exactly the same effect upon the mind as might be produced if the word 'fame' were suddenly to be seen written in large clear letters upon a wall. In this sphere, therefore, allegories serve merely as 'hieroglyphics' which impress upon the spectator things that could have been communicated to him just as adequately by straightforward maxims or inscriptions; they have a determinate 'meaning', and once this meaning has been stated or explained or discovered there is really no more to be said; 'the end is reached'. But it is an end foreign to all plastic or pictorial art. True, a painting may be of the allegorical kind and at the same time be an artistic masterpiece. But its aesthetic value will be quite independent of any considerations relating to its character or effectiveness as an allegory. The relation in which the picture viewed as an allegory stands to what it indicates or signifies is in other words entirely different from the relation in which, viewed as a work of art, it stands to the Idea of which it is the expression or the portrayal. And here, I think, Schopenhauer was trying to make the perfectly intelligible point that, although works of non-literary art may be genuinely illuminating or revelatory, in a way that justifies us in ascribing to them a profound significance, it would nevertheless be wrong to think that this means that they convey some independently communicable 'message' which might have been transmitted in quite another medium: as Gauguin once remarked to André Fontainas in a letter (1899), his compositions never 'started from an . . . abstract idea which I was trying to quicken by means of a representation'.[1] In this sense it can be claimed that the meaning and import of a work of art is intrinsic to the work itself, without however implying that it may not lead the beholder to appreciate and comprehend aspects of his experience to which he had previously been impervious, or that it may not intimate to him deep-lying truths about things, elusive insights of which he feels that it alone

1. Paul Gauguin, *Lettres à sa femme et à ses amis*, p. 293.

constitutes the uniquely adequate embodiment. At a non-theoretical level, Schopenhauer suggests, such features of aesthetic awareness are in fact generally recognized by sensitive and perceptive persons; but when the question is one of providing a *philosophical* account of the nature of the beautiful, a certain blindness intervenes. Thus he instances the distinguished eighteenth-century historian of art, Winckelmann, who showed in his particular judgements the greatest penetration and sensitivity, but who was also led into commending allegory, speaking (quite incorrectly) of 'the presentation of universal concepts' as being the highest aim of art; and he argues that a parallel phenomenon is often met with in the sphere of moral philosophy, where a man of outstanding moral character, and very good at reaching accurate assessments in particular cases, may for all that not be especially well equipped to investigate the ethical significance of conduct from a philosophical standpoint.

In practice, therefore, Schopenhauer applies his conception of the Ideas to the interpretation of the plastic and pictorial arts with greater flexibility than might have been expected from the initial very bare and abstract formulation of his theory. There remains, however, one problem connected with these forms of artistic activity which could be expected to raise special difficulties for him: the problem of the representation of *individual* human character. For may not Schopenhauer's thesis that it is the essential function of art to exhibit the Ideas, not just to copy the particular phenomena of sense-experience, be understood to entail the view that when (for example) the artist paints or draws a given person he is not so much concerned to portray the peculiar characteristics and facial traits which differentiate that man from other men, as to bring to light the 'general character of the species' which manifests itself, however imperfectly, in the empirical human being who stands before him? And such a view, although it might possibly (if suitably interpreted and qualified) appear to reflect the approach adopted towards depiction of the human face and form by artists working within certain conventions – say, those governing some Greek sculpture or early Byzantine art – seems

hard to reconcile with the tradition of modern European portraiture as it has come to be accepted. Schopenhauer recognized the force of this objection quite clearly; and he tried to meet it in a manner which, though curious, is not lacking in ingenuity. In effect what he said was the following. Although each particular man can be seen as a 'representative of the species' and hence as somebody in whom the 'Idea' of humanity in general plainly manifests and reveals itself to the eyes of the artist, this does not mean that he cannot also be seen as to a certain extent expressing 'an Idea peculiar to himself', or 'special Idea', which Schopenhauer connects with his innermost character or individual will (I, pp. 206–7).[1] This character shows itself to the percipient partly through 'permanent physiognomy and bodily form', partly through the emotions, passions, inclinations, and so forth that find concrete embodiment in facial expressions and the movements and typical gestures a man makes with his body (I, pp. 290–2). It lies within the sphere of painting and drawing to penetrate and capture the character of a person in the sense described, to render it transparent to our gaze in a way that could never be achieved by any form of merely photographic representation; as Schopenhauer said in a conversation with the painter, Julius Hamel, in 1856: 'Take note . . . that the portrait should not be a reflection in a mirror, a daguerreotype reproduces that far better. The portrait must be a lyric poem, through which speaks a whole personality, with all its thoughts, feelings, and desires.'[2] At the same time it must be recognized that in so delineating the inward nature of a particular man, the artist is also concerned to make apparent a specific aspect of humanity in general; he has to 'express the Idea of man in a definite individual manner, giving prominence to a special side to it' when he paints a portrait, rather than producing a likeness which gives the impression of *simply* drawing attention to and accentuating the distinguishing physical characteristics of the subject, thereby degenerating into caricature or alternatively (Schopenhauer elsewhere suggests) into a kind of over-emphatic and therefore 'unnatural'

1. See below; p. 260.
2. Quoted by L. Goldscheider, *Vermeer*, p. 33.

realism. The implied distinction is somewhat subtle, but one can see partly what is meant. For are there not drawings and paintings which, though undeniably 'like' their subjects, seem nevertheless to be curiously superficial and lifeless, even vulgar, because they present the sitter as a thing or object whose visible distinguishing marks have been coldly observed and set down, rather than as a living person animated by emotions, desires, and beliefs which we can recognize and appreciate by virtue of the common humanity we share with him? In this connexion Schopenhauer further points out that, in the portrayal of individual character and feeling as it shows itself in a face, the characteristic quality of the eyes and the complexion also play a crucial part, and argues that this helps to explain why such portrayal is pre-eminently the province of painting, not of sculpture; in the latter 'beauty and grace', conceived as belonging to the ideal or 'norm', remain the chief concern. Certain forms of human expression, however, are incapable of being satisfactorily represented either in painting or in sculpture – for example, those involving the use of the voice; and he instances the famous controversy concerning the Laocoön group and the question, discussed at length in the eighteenth century by both Winckelmann and Lessing, of why the statue of Laocoön is not shown as 'crying out'. Rejecting former explanations, Schopenhauer argues that since the whole point and essence of shrieking consists in the sound produced and its effect upon the onlooker, the impression created by a distorted stone mouth from which no noise issued could not fail to be utterly ridiculous as well as ugly, and that therefore the sculptor rightly chose a different means of expressing Laocoön's agony. In so doing, he did not fall into the error committed by Guido Reni in his picture of the Slaughter of the Innocents when he tried to depict 'six shrieking wide-open mouths' (III, p. 198). One wonders what Schopenhauer would have said of the choir of angels in Piero della Francesca's *Nativity*. Would he have claimed that here too an aesthetic blunder had been made? Or would he have maintained instead that since the angels are singing, not venting violent feelings or passions, and since their features, far from being distorted, are

perfectly composed and calm, the picture cannot be appealed to as a refutation of his view?

The Non-pictorial Arts

So far we have considered Schopenhauer's philosophy of art principally from the standpoint of what he says about painting and sculpture. His imagination and mode of thinking were peculiarly visual, and it is not surprising that this characteristic of his mind should be reflected in a tendency to produce examples largely drawn from the plastic and pictorial arts in order to illustrate his aesthetic theory. But his notion of the Ideas was put forward as providing the key to the interpretation of the other arts as well, with the important exception of music, to which he accorded a different treatment. Let us now see how he accommodates them within the framework of his general doctrine.

(i) *Architecture.* Schopenhauer grades the arts according to a scale which reflects the structure of his metaphysical account of the fashion wherein the will manifests itself in the world of experience. It was earlier pointed out that to the different stages of the will's 'objectification' in phenomenal reality there are said to correspond various specific Ideas, these forming an ascending order. The Ideas which architecture brings to clear perception are held to constitute the lowest grades of the will's objectivity, and (as we might expect) they are identified by him with the fundamental and not further explicable 'residue' allegedly presupposed by explanations and theories of the despised 'mechanical' sciences. Thus we are told that such Ideas as those of 'gravity, cohesion, and rigidity' represent the principal concern of architecture, and that 'properly speaking the conflict between gravity and rigidity' forms its 'sole aesthetic material' (I, p. 277). If we disregard the suggestion (clearly implicit within it) that the architect possesses an insight beyond the capacity of the natural scientist, it is not difficult to see in a general way what this claim essentially amounts to. The constant theme of architecture is asserted to be that of support and load (or burden), its 'fundamental law' that no

load shall be without a sufficient support and no support be without a suitable load: the purest example of the theme in question is said to be found in buildings constructed on the principle of 'column and entablature', for here the support and the load are 'completely separated' so that 'the reciprocal action of the two and their relation to each other becomes apparent' (III, p. 182). In other styles of architecture – for example, such as make use of the vault – this effect of pure separation is not achieved; for in the vault every stone functions both as support and load, and one has at least the impression that the pillars themselves are held in position by the pressure of opposite arches. Schopenhauer raises similar objections to slanted (as opposed to flat) roofs – where the two halves of the roof mutually support one another – and also to houses in which the balconies stick out without any visible means of being held up – 'they seem to hang suspended, and disturb the mind' (III, p. 184). When, on the other hand, buildings are constructed in a manner that ensures the manifest separation of load and support and according to precise calculations (such as the Greeks used) as to the necessary support required by a given load, the tension and interaction between the qualities residing in 'the crude mass of the stone' can be fully exhibited, the qualities themselves being thereby caused to unfold their potentialities in the most distinct and impressive ways. And just this is the aesthetic (although not, of course, the practical) end of architecture, an end the promotion of which is further assisted by a careful observance of the rules of proportion and symmetry, and by the use of straight or regularly curved forms – cubes, cylinders, cones, and the like.

Such considerations led Schopenhauer to treat the Greek style of building as the highest and most perfect attained or indeed attainable, and to argue that any obvious departure from the rules and patterns embodied in that style was always a step on the downward path. It is true that he qualifies his view to the extent of allowing that, in following the Greek ideal, architects must be ready to adapt it to circumstances and to the limitations imposed by climate, period, and country. It is also true that he is prepared to concede to Gothic architecture a

certain beauty, agreeing that through its essentially vertical soaring structure, its apparent 'conquest of gravity by rigidity', it acquires the 'mysterious and hyperphysical character' commonly attributed to it. But for all that it is based finally upon 'illusion', achieving its effect purely 'subjectively' by appealing to our emotions and to certain associations of an historical sort, thus arousing feelings foreign to true art. Furthermore, by employing many devices which are structurally pointless or unnecessary, it can be shown to lack the 'open' quality, the honesty, characteristic of classical buildings, where we see 'every part – whether pillar, column, arch, entablature, or door, window, stair, or balcony – attain its end in the most direct and simple manner' (III, p. 188).

From a similar standpoint Schopenhauer goes on to attack the architecture of his own time. A 'tasteless style', it specializes in useless ornamentation and clutters buildings up with 'meaningless' accessories and excrescences; complications and whims are introduced to no good purpose, and the general impression created is that of a child playing about with tools he does not know how to use. A source of these mistaken procedures is to be found in a widespread misinterpretation of the view that everything constructed by men for their own use – not only buildings but appliances and utensils of all kinds – should preserve a similarity to the productions of nature. For this has come to be understood to mean that the similarity referred to must be one of *visible shape*: thus pillars must be modelled on the shapes taken by trees or human limbs, receptacles should look like 'mussels or snail-shells or the calyx of a flower' and so on (*Parerga*, II, p. 459): in other words, all artefacts must as far as possible be made to imitate natural forms. This dogma, which was certainly intrinsic to many aspects of popular taste in the middle and late nineteenth century, Schopenhauer repudiates as resting upon misconceptions. To begin with, it wrongly assimilates a distinct art like architecture to the various representational arts – painting, sculpture, drawing. But architecture does not (to use Schopenhauer's terminology) try to 'repeat' or 'copy' in a separate empirical medium the Ideas which manifest themselves in the

objects of experience; instead it presents us with 'the thing itself' (e.g. the stone that forms the builder's material), and in a manner that clearly and completely shows forth or expresses its essential character. In any case, the entire reference to nature in this context is confused in another way. There is indeed a sense in which the architect can properly be said to turn to nature as affording him with a model, but it is not what it is commonly conceived to be. For all products of nature exhibit a perfect (though unconscious) adaptation of means to ends – 'the will works from within outwards and completely masters the material'. Likewise, Schopenhauer holds, buildings should be constructed, not in a spirit of puerile imitation of natural forms, but in such a fashion that every part directly and unambiguously proclaims its function, there being a total absence of anything that does not serve some structural purpose. Here, as elsewhere, his eye was of course fixed upon his favoured Greek ideal: and it may strike one as something of a paradox that despite this, and despite the distinction he was prone to draw between the aesthetic and the purely practical or utilitarian ends architecture serves, so many of his observations seem nevertheless to anticipate the great upheaval in architectural thinking initiated by men like Adolf Loos and Hermann Muthesius more than fifty years after he wrote.

(ii) *Poetry and Drama.* In the light of Schopenhauer's general thesis concerning the role of concepts in art, it might at first appear hard to see how he could give a satisfactory account of literature in its various forms. For, as he points out, 'abstract concepts' are certainly the 'immediate material' of poetry and prose alike; yet 'knowledge of the Idea', which can only be attained through perception, is said to be as much the object of literary art as of painting and sculpture. He claims, however, that there is really no difficulty in reconciling these propositions:

> As the chemist obtains solid precipitates by combining perfectly clear and transparent fluids, so the poet understands how

to precipitate, as it were, the concrete, the individual, the perceptible idea, out of the abstract and transparent universality of the concepts, by the manner in which he combines them. (I, p. 313)

The general position maintained throughout Schopenhauer's discussion of the literary arts is in fact that in the domains of both poetry and drama the artist is concerned, through the precise or suggestive use of words, to create and communicate pregnant concentrated images, images which have their sole source in, and acquire their power and meaning from, lived experience in all its variety and individuality. At the same time, since the poet as much as the painter strives to express the Ideas implicit in the particular objects of sense-perception, the objects, scenes, situations, emotions, and so forth which he imaginatively presents are portrayed in a manner capable of revealing universal truths about the things described; it is as if the poetic genius held before us a 'clarifying mirror' in which 'all that is essential and significant appears to us as collected together and placed in the brightest light, and what is accidental and foreign is excluded' (I, p. 321). Matthew Arnold later expressed much the same point when he wrote, in an essay on Maurice de Guérin, that the power of poetry in dealing with things lay in its making us 'feel ourselves to be in contact with the essential nature of these objects, to be no longer bewildered and oppressed by them, but to have their secret, and to be in harmony with them'. Further, Schopenhauer claims that, because of the adaptability of the medium he employs, the poet is able to move over a far wider range of experience than is available to the pictorial artist; more especially he is in a position to achieve through his works a deeper and more comprehensive penetration of human nature. For whereas a landscape (say) may unfold its whole character to a painter from some particular point of view and at some single well-chosen moment, the same is not true of a man; the personality of human beings is not exhaustively exhibited in their static postures or expressions, but can only fully come to light in movement, through the continuities and patterns discernible in their developing thoughts and actions, and it is just this movement that literary

art is uniquely suited to apprehend and illuminate. It can therefore be affirmed that the presentation of man, in the various aspects of his life, feeling, and behaviour, is the supreme topic and problem of poetry: in other words poetry deals with the revelation of that Idea which constitutes 'the highest grade of the objectivity of the will'.

This may naturally suggest that there is a close kinship between literature and history. For the historian, too, has to do with human behaviour, his approach to his subject-matter being, moreover – despite what certain misguided social theorists and philosophers have asserted to the contrary – significantly unlike that adopted by natural scientists towards theirs. Far from having as its aim the subsumption of human behaviour under general laws or the interpretation of such behaviour in terms of abstract theoretical systems, history forever 'creeps along the ground of experience', wedded to a stand-point from which events are seen as individual and unique (III, pp. 221–2). Scientifically-minded persons who adopt a different view are often led astray by the way in which they are apt to misconstrue the categories historians tend to use in their work: for example, the classificatory schemes and notions embodied in references to revolutions and institutions or in the application of generalized headings to particular historical periods, like 'The Thirty Years War'. Though tempting, it is none the less an error to confuse the employment of devices like these with the explanatory concepts and hypotheses which typically feature in the physical sciences. For historical categories serve no inductive or predictive purpose. Their usefulness lies in their making it possible for the historian to refer compendiously to large numbers of complex individual facts and circumstances; not, however, because they show these to be instances of universal laws, but solely because they afford a means of collating and communicating information which, considered in all its variety and detail, would be completely unassimilable and incomprehensible. In this sense they can be called 'subjective:' they do not compel our acceptance, and alternatives to them are always possible. Nor should they lead us into false hypostatization, into following the Hegelians by treating collective

nouns like 'the life of the race' as names of real entities: 'only the individuals and their course of life are real, the nations and their lives being mere abstractions' (III, p. 225).[1]

Yet if the historian's concern is always in the end with individual human beings, it manifests itself in a fashion different from that in which a similar concern finds expression in works of poetic or dramatic art. There are two main reasons for this. In the first place the historian deals only with 'phenomenal' truth, not truth as it relates to the Idea (I, p. 316): he is for the most part satisfied if his account tallies with the evidence and sources at his disposal and can therefore be regarded as giving a reasonably accurate description of what happened on a particular occasion or in a particular period of the past. But such reporting of past events does not by itself provide any illumination of human life of the kind communicated by great works of literature (although it is true that in the hands of certain exceptional historians the facts of history may also be comprehended poetically, with 'artistic eyes'). Indeed, Schopenhauer sometimes implies that the very dependence upon sources and testimony, which is intrinsic to the historian's pursuit of his craft, tends to obstruct the achievement of insight in this sense. The accumulation of facts and information, the concentration upon things known at second hand and therefore 'dead' – these aspects of the scholar's activity, though contributing to what normally passes for 'learning', all too easily make it impossible for a man to arrive at 'the true view of life' which in the last analysis can only spring from direct contact with existence itself, not from the mere absorption of what other people have thought and written. In a striking passage, Schopenhauer makes the point that for a person who studies in order to gain true 'insight', books and so forth are no more than rungs on the ladder by which he climbs to the summit of knowledge, and 'as soon as a rung has raised him a step he

1. Schopenhauer's views on history, and in particular his criticisms of Hegel's conception of history as a progressive development, made a deep impression on the great Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt. See e.g. the latter's *Reflections on World History* (*Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*).

leaves it behind'. On the other hand, those who study 'in order to fill their memory' do not use the rungs of the ladder for climbing, but instead take them off and load themselves with them to take away, rejoicing at the increasing weight of their burden: hence they 'remain for ever below, because they bear what ought to have borne them' (II, p. 256).[1] Mere scholarship and book-learning must in fact be wholly distinguished from what in the present context Schopenhauer calls *wisdom*, this being a profound deeply-felt sense of how things are, of what the world is really like. It follows that learning, unlike wisdom, is always relative to an age, a period: the learned men of the past, being for the greater part as children compared with us, need our indulgence; but the wise of earlier times do not.

The second important difference between the historian and the literary artist springs from the fact that the former, although not a scientist, nevertheless conforms in his own fashion to the principle of sufficient reason; and this means that he looks at everything that happened in the past in terms of its relations and connexions with other occurrences, and with an eye to its influence upon subsequent events, particularly as bearing upon his own age. Consequently the notion of *significance* is employed within history in such a way that it can be applied to the most trivial or petty actions, provided only that they may be shown to have been performed by men of power or influence and to have had important repercussions upon the general course of events. Because historians always tend to interpret the past along these lines, their range of interest is exceedingly restricted, being largely confined on one side to the actions of outstanding figures and personages (who are anyway likely to be depicted in a very artificial manner), and on the other to the mass movements of nations and armies. But with the poet or dramatist things are quite otherwise. By the perceptive portrayal of character and by the delineation of carefully-chosen

1. In the light of his early reading of Schopenhauer, it is not uninteresting to compare this figure with the image of the ladder which once climbed must be thrown away, used by Wittgenstein at the end of the *Tractatus* to show how the propositions of his book should be read and understood.

situations and settings, they present the particular actions, feelings, and thoughts of individual human beings in such a way that these appear to us as being significant *in themselves*; through them the artist can be said to show forth in the concrete, rather than state in the abstract, certain pervasive and universally recognizable features of human nature and experience, and to do so, moreover, in a manner that at once strikes us as being exactly true to our own deepest knowledge of ourselves. In Schopenhauer's words, 'selected characters are placed in those circumstances in which all their special qualities unfold themselves, the depths of the human heart are revealed and become visible in extraordinary and significant actions' (I, p. 326).

Generally speaking, then, the concept of significance has an entirely different force when considered in relation to the artist's aims from the force it has when considered in relation to the aims of the historian or (Schopenhauer might have added) of the mere story-teller. In the case of the last two, the decision whether to call an event 'significant' is largely determined by reference to the question 'What happened next?' In the case of the artist it is not: in the context of literature the term's meaning derives from the way in which the writer takes from life something 'quite particular and individual' and yet so presents it that it becomes revelatory of human existence in general. Thus it might be claimed that with a great novelist like Tolstoy or Thomas Hardy, as well as with the dramatic poets Schopenhauer constantly alludes to, Shakespeare and Goethe, a single incident, possibly even a mere gesture or passing thought, may be portrayed in a fashion that lights up in one momentary flash a range of truths about ourselves and our relations to others; truths to which, viewing things as we normally do in the perspective of purpose, cause, and consequence, we have previously been blind.

Schopenhauer believed that the interpretation he put forward was valid for all the different forms of literary art. In lyric poetry, for instance, the writer is chiefly concerned to express his own state or condition – 'the represented is also the representer' (I, p. 321). But although for this reason lyric poetry

is in one sense essentially subjective, it at the same time gives concrete embodiment to moods, yearnings, and so forth which are universally experienced and shared, and thereby distinctly and precisely expresses definite aspects of the Idea of man. Successful lyrics are indeed immediately understood and appreciated just because they provide a perfect crystallization of recognizable human emotions and responses, a crystallization, moreover, which is only rendered possible by a certain detachment, or 'standing back', from the feelings that give rise to it; it is this feature – the alternation and contrast between the poet as will-governed individual with human desires and fears, and the poet as will-less contemplative subject of knowledge – that gives to lyric verse its peculiar haunting poignancy. But whatever may be the merits of such poetry, it is by its nature incapable of achieving the profound 'objectivity' which Schopenhauer associates with epic and (above all) dramatic writing. In the greatest examples of these forms, it is not merely that the motives from which the persons represented act and talk seem to be entirely natural and unforced (Schopenhauer considers that the 'romantic' style of poetry compares unfavourably with the 'classical' in this respect); one has the additional impression that in creating and developing each of his characters the writer – imaginatively speaking – has 'transformed himself' into them, with the result that all are stamped with complete genuineness and authenticity. And as with the characterization, so with the thematic material: it is not unexpected to find Schopenhauer regarding tragedy as standing at the pinnacle of dramatic art, coming closest, in what it treats of, to the fundamental reality of things – 'the terrible side of life . . . the unspeakable pain, the ills of humanity, the triumph of evil, the scornful domination of chance, and the irretrievable fall of the just and innocent' (I, p. 326). Those who, like Dr Johnson in the strictures he passed on some of Shakespeare's plays, lament the absence of 'poetic justice' in tragedy, show themselves to be obtuse, 'dull', the victims of a total misconception concerning the nature of tragedy, which has for its aim, not to exhibit the world as we think it should be, but to show it up for what it is. And this purpose is, Schopenhauer thinks, most effectively

and compellingly realized by works which, instead of making the misfortunes they record ensue upon some act of extreme wickedness, or upon a series of fantastic or incredible accidents, show them rather as springing quite naturally out of situations or relationships commonly met with in ordinary life, where the people involved are 'so placed with regard to one another that their position forces them, knowingly and with their eyes open, to do one another the greatest injury, without any one of them being entirely in the wrong' (I, p. 329). Such dramas bring home the capacity for causing harm that is for ever present in our natures, together with the uncertainties and dangers that constantly lurk in the most familiar and trusted surroundings, in a particularly intense and vivid way: whereas plays in which everything is put down either to the appalling and deliberate wickedness of certain exceptional individuals, or else to the operations of an unpredictable chance, are apt to strike us less forcibly, since here we are inclined to treat 'evil' and 'fate' as remote external powers which (though terrible) are not likely, for all that, to touch us personally. The first type of tragedy is therefore to be preferred; it tends to awaken a more immediate and comprehensive realization of the pervasive character of human existence in general, and is also more liable to help prepare the way for that 'turning of the will' from life in which (Schopenhauer will later argue) true salvation is alone to be found.

(iii) *Music.* For Schopenhauer, music occupies a privileged place among the arts, standing 'quite apart from the others'. It does not, like architecture, attempt to exhibit the Ideas by showing them directly manifesting themselves in certain natural materials. But neither does it – as painting, sculpture, and (in another way) literature do – seek to make them apparent through the representation of particular things in another medium. For properly speaking it is not concerned with reproducing the Ideas at all. And here Schopenhauer seems to have been impressed by the fact that in music – unlike the so-called 'representational' arts – the great majority of purely instrumental works cannot be said to have a specific *subject*: it

does not, in other words, appear sensible or appropriate to inquire what it is they are 'of' or 'about', in the way a picture may be said to be a picture of figures or fruit, or a play or novel be described as dealing with a certain kind of situation or character. (Absence of 'subject' in this sense presumably partly explains the analogy sometimes drawn between contemporary 'abstract' painting and music.) As Schopenhauer at one point puts it, 'whoever gives himself up entirely to the impression of a symphony seems to see all the possible events of life and the world take place in himself, yet if he reflects, he can find no likeness between the music and the things that passed before his mind' (I, p. 339). But does this not raise a curious problem? For how (it may be asked) can a piece of music like a sonata both appear to the listener to be deeply expressive or eloquent, and at the same time not be said to resemble or otherwise portray something apart from itself?

Schopenhauer conceded that music is in fact quite often composed with a view to reproducing in auditory terms the phenomena of the perceptible world, as if it could function as a kind of 'painting in sounds'. Such music he called 'imitative', and it was exemplified by such works as Haydn's *Seasons*; he held, however, that all compositions of this type betray a misunderstanding of the essential nature of music, and are to be rejected 'entirely' (I, p. 341). And similar objections apply when the words of a song or the libretto of an opera are made the chief thing, the music itself being assigned a subordinate or merely expressive role: 'if the music keeps too closely to the words, and tries to form itself according to the events, it is attempting to speak a language not its own' (ibid., p. 338). Rossini, for whom Schopenhauer had a very high regard, avoided this mistake; his music speaks 'its own language' so clearly that it does not require the accompaniment of words, and can be played purely instrumentally without losing any of its effect or quality. But the same cannot be said of most grand opera: in a later essay (*Parerga*, II, p. 465) Schopenhauer goes out of his way to condemn the manner in which the mind is distracted from the music, not merely by the intense interest produced by the unfolding of the plot, but also by the whole

elaborate and brilliant spectacle which is a feature of the performance of such works: the audience is thereby made 'as little as possible receptive to the holy, mysterious, inward language of tones', and 'the attainment of the musical end is directly counteracted'. Ballet is even worse; for here an element of 'lasciviousness' is alleged to obtrude itself, further deadening the aesthetic response.

Such considerations are all connected with Schopenhauer's belief that in the last analysis music is concerned with the will, alone and in itself: the other arts 'speak only of shadows, but it speaks of the reality (*Wesen*)' (I, p. 333). He maintained that while music cannot without absurdity be supposed to treat directly of the visible tangible phenomena constituting the world of sense-perception and of the Ideas which underlie them, it is not for this reason to be regarded as standing entirely on its own, unrelated to anything else that falls within the compass of human consciousness. On the contrary, in music the 'inner side' of man, and also of the world in general, finds its most profound and complete artistic expression. And here, Schopenhauer holds, we have the answer to our question of why we respond to music in the manner we do, of why we feel that it embodies a 'truth' which we cannot, however, explain by treating musical works as striving to represent or otherwise signify particular elements in our perceptual experience. For what music actually gives us is nothing more nor less than the 'secret history of our will', and in melody itself we find the extracted 'quintessence' of the innumerable strivings and emotions that make up and colour the inner life of each one of us; the very character of melody – the constant digressions from and return to the keynote – reflects the eternal nature of the human will, which strives, is satisfied, and ever strives anew. So it is that in a symphony by a composer such as Beethoven we find exhibited with the greatest accuracy and subtlety a vast range of human passions and feelings – passions and feelings which at the same time we intuitively understand to be connected with the inherent nature of all reality, with what Schopenhauer called *rerum concordia discors*, the discordant concord of things. Hence our inveterate tendency to clothe the

music with 'flesh and blood', and to allow our imaginations to conjure before us a profusion of scenes and examples taken from life and nature. But this tendency must not mislead us into confusing music with something which it is not. In the essay already referred to, Schopenhauer once again insisted that 'the expression of the passions is one thing, the painting of things another' (*Parerga*, II, p. 463); it had still to be recognized that the pictorial images evoked by what we hear are never more than 'arbitrary additions' extrinsic to the music itself, which is better enjoyed and understood in its immediate unadulterated purity.

Schopenhauer's contention that there is an indissoluble relation between music and human passion, that the former 'like God, sees only the heart', is no doubt partly connected with the point that the most fitting terms with which to characterize particular musical works and passages are largely drawn from the vocabulary used to describe emotions, moods, and states of mind generally. 'Gay', 'melancholy', 'solemn', 'languorous', 'nostalgic', and so on are typical examples; and the consideration that many of the expressions employed may also be descriptive of physical movements and demeanour would not have greatly troubled him in view of his theory of the will's relation with the body. There was, moreover, a further reason why the interpretation of music he provided seemed to him to be right. For it helped to explain and justify the supreme status among the arts he thought it necessary to assign to music, and to do so in a way that accorded with the central thought underlying his own metaphysic – namely, that each man as the 'microcosm' finds the kernel of the whole of existence within himself. From this standpoint (Schopenhauer suggests) it could be maintained that music is a kind of hidden exercise in metaphysics where the mind does not know that it is philosophizing, in parody of Leibniz's dictum that music is an '*exercitium arithmeticae occultum nescientis se numerare animi*'. For in disclosing, in a fashion far removed from that characteristic of all conscious thought and reflection, 'the deepest secrets of human willing and feeling', the composer at the same time 'reveals the innermost essence of the world and expresses the

deepest wisdom in a language which his reason does not understand' (I, p. 336). But philosophy has already been characterized by Schopenhauer as an attempt to express the true nature of reality in very general concepts, with the proviso that this does not mean that the philosopher should try (like the Rationalist metaphysicians) to derive it *from* such concepts *a priori*. There is therefore, he thought, an evident parallel between music and philosophy, the former doing 'intuitively' and as it were 'unconsciously' what the latter attempts to realize in a fully rational and intelligible form; and he puts forward the qualified suggestion that supposing it were possible to give a detailed elucidation in concepts of the content of music, this would itself amount to a complete and wholly adequate philosophical interpretation of the inner nature of the world. Against such an idea, however, must be set the total incapacity of reflective thought to capture and penetrate the infinitely various and richly complex 'movements of the will' which occur below the surface of articulate consciousness; in music these find natural and exact expression, but reason is in the end forced merely to summarize them under 'the wide and negative concept of *feeling*'.

Schopenhauer admits that there are considerable obscurities in his account of music, these inevitably arising out of the inherent difficulty of the subject. Certainly the claim (repeatedly made) that music is a kind of language seems to require more elucidation than is given; as it stands it appears little more than a rather vague metaphor. But in any event it would probably be out of place to try to undertake a formal criticism of his musical theory, taken by itself and as a whole. For one thing, the account Schopenhauer offers is integrally bound up with the rest of his philosophical system; moreover, its chief interest could be said to lie in the way it provided him with a framework within which to put forward a number of highly perceptive and suggestive individual observations on the subject. As is well known, his ideas took a considerable hold upon Wagner: among the latter's own, not always very coherent writings there are explicit references to Schopenhauer's views concerning the emotional and philosophical significance of

music, while the influence of Schopenhauer's metaphysics in general is clearly discernible in such an opera as *Tristan*. But despite the impression Schopenhauer's writings produced upon him, the admiration Wagner felt and freely expressed can scarcely be said to have been reciprocated. After a visit to *The Flying Dutchman* Schopenhauer remarked that Wagner did not know what music was. And in a letter to Frauenstädt (30 December 1854) he referred dryly to his having received 'a book of Richard Wagner's, not printed for the trade but only for friends, on fine thick paper and nicely bound. It is called *Der Ring der Niebelungen*, and is a series of four operas which he is going to compose one day – no doubt the true Art-work of the Future: it seems very fantastic . . . No letter with it, but merely inscribed "With reverence and gratitude" '[1]. Whatever effects and repercussions his philosophical ideas may subsequently have had, Schopenhauer's own preferences in music, as in the other arts where his enthusiasm for Greek models was characteristic, largely reflected the interests and sympathies current in Germany during the opening decades of the nineteenth century. The more luxuriant developments of Romantic taste, which manifested themselves in its latter half, would have held little attraction for him.

1. *Briefe*, ed. Grisebach, p. 285. The poem of the *Ring* was privately printed by Wagner in 1853.

CHAPTER SIX

Ethics and the Individual Will

So far Schopenhauer's chief concern has been with two things: first, the limitations of ordinary thought and knowledge, and secondly, the character of the aesthetic consciousness, viewed as in some sense 'transcending' these limitations. Each of these forms of human awareness has been explained by reference to the key notion of the will, the latter being regarded as constitutive both of the inner nature of man himself and also of the world to which he belongs as a phenomenal being. In the course of providing such an explanation Schopenhauer has already been obliged to say a certain amount about human nature itself and the way in which it finds expression in action. Concerning this topic, however, there remains much to be discussed. For here we are confronted with two subjects which can be said to 'concern everyone directly and . . . be foreign or indifferent to none': the problem of the ethical and – inseparably connected with it – the tormenting question of human freedom. Schopenhauer considers these matters, which he speaks of as being of the utmost 'seriousness', in more than one of his writings. They are first touched upon, though very indirectly, in the *Fourfold Root* (Chapter VII); a large part of the fourth book of *The World as Will and Idea* is taken up with them; they also form the theme of two of his later works, *On the Freedom of the Will* and *On the Foundation of Morality* (1841); and the collection of essays, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, includes a lengthy section entitled 'Ethics'. He cannot therefore be accused of neglecting the claims of moral thought and conduct to philosophical attention.

At the start of his discussion, however, Schopenhauer makes it clear that there are respects in which what he has to say may disappoint readers whose expectations spring from an acquaintance with certain other treatises on moral philosophy. The idea that philosophy can become 'practical', that it can 'guide

conduct' or 'transform character' – these are old claims which ought to be altogether given up: the task of philosophy is to investigate, not to prescribe; it can only explain and interpret what is presented to it. And in any case, so far as morality is concerned, where the question is one of the worth or worthlessness of existence, of 'salvation or damnation', it is not the 'dead concepts' of philosophy which decide things but the 'innermost nature' of man himself. Schopenhauer cites Schleiermacher as an example of a philosopher who takes certain abstract concepts which occur in moral systems – concepts like *duty*, *virtue*, *highest good*, *moral law* – as his point of departure; he then analyses these with great subtlety but never thinks to go back to their sources in the realities of human life, with the result that all his discussions are both useless and tedious (II, p. 262). Schopenhauer does not intend to make this mistake; nor, again, will he take it upon himself to lay down precepts and universal recipes for producing, once and for all time, every virtue – something only too commonly attempted in this sphere. That does not mean, however, that we should expect him instead to follow the fashionable Hegelian line, treating the matters with which he is concerned in purely historical terms; there will be no question of his narrating histories and giving them out as philosophy, as if the problem were simply one of charting the path taken by things between the beginning and end of the world, and then of locating our own position on the map. Apart from other objections to which a procedure of this type is exposed, it represents an attempt to philosophize in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason, to look for the 'whence, whither and why of the world' instead of seeking only the *what* (I, p. 353).

There was a further important respect in which Schopenhauer claimed that his approach diverged from that adopted by some of his predecessors and contemporaries, one that was epitomized in his attitude to what he termed 'theological morals'. Too many moral philosophers, conforming here to the general inclinations of popular thinking on the matter, had spoken as if the final support and justification of moral beliefs must lie in the will and purposes of an external 'transcendent'

being, such a being usually assuming the form of a supra-personal agency or God, but sometimes (and more obscurely) being presented in the guise of abstract 'principles' or 'Absolutes'. The conception of such an entity had not only commonly been appealed to on the grounds that it was essential to the validity of any moral system whatsoever (for without it what reason would there be for thinking that there is an obligation to obey moral precepts at all?); it had also been considered necessary as providing human beings with a sufficient *motive* for conducting their lives in a morally acceptable manner, by holding out the prospect of ultimate reward or punishment (in some form or other) for the things that they did. Schopenhauer insists that he is not prepared to touch 'hypotheses' of this type. The Kantian demolition of the pretensions of speculative theology had once and for all time exposed the worthlessness of the various alleged 'proofs' of the existence of God (*FM* §2), thus 'eliminating theism from philosophy'; and so far as the pompous abstractions of pseudo-metaphysics were concerned, he for one would not speak with raised eyebrows of mysterious 'absolutes', 'infinites', and 'supersensibles', where it would be more to the point to speak of 'cloud-cuckoo-land' – there was no occasion to 'serve up covered empty dishes of this kind' (I, p. 353).

Schopenhauer believed, in fact, that moral philosophy – whether or not this was generally recognized – had entered into a period of crisis, and his grounds for so thinking were in some ways similar to those underlying the opinions expressed in more recent times in the atheistic existentialism of Sartre and his followers. According to Sartre, if we dispense with the idea of a God creating and fashioning human beings in accordance with a preconceived pattern and with the intention of their fulfilling certain roles or purposes, we must take seriously the logical consequences of our beliefs. It is no good, for example, continuing to adhere to the view that there exist certain *a priori* values laid up in a kind of 'intelligible heaven'. On the contrary, if God does not exist, then all possibility of discovering pre-ordained values inscribed in such a realm disappears likewise.[1]

1. J.-P. Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. P. Mairet, p. 33.

The conception of values and rules already fixed and given, subsisting independently of human choice and acceptance, is as mythical as the idea of there being a pre-determined 'nature' or 'essence' to which each of us, as individual human beings, must or should conform; and the conclusion Sartre himself draws from all this is that the responsibility for the moral attitudes we adopt, as well as for the actions we perform and the characters we possess, rests with us and with us alone, since these are things which in every case we choose (and have to choose) for ourselves. As will shortly emerge, such a position is generally speaking very different from the one to which Schopenhauer was led: all the same, Sartre's starting-point – the breakdown of theological ethics – is not so far removed from Schopenhauer's. Admittedly Schopenhauer did not think it impossible that religious dogmas may serve a useful practical purpose in keeping men's behaviour within reasonable bounds, although in the end this was something only empirical investigation could decide. Admittedly, too, he was prepared to allow that some at least of the doctrines of religion may embody significant insights. However, as we have seen, he flatly denied that religious propositions could be taken at their face value and accepted as literally true: to interpret them in this sense and then to try to justify them by philosophical argument was consequently absurd. In so far as the allegorical doctrines of religions do exhibit as it were 'intuitively' communicable and knowable truths of the sort requisite to serious moral philosophy, such truths can be arrived at independently by a system of the kind Schopenhauer undertakes to provide. But in this system – eschewing, as it does, assumptions that characteristically underlie all 'transcendent' metaphysics – there can be no question of postulating a creative benevolent deity or supernatural legislator existing 'beyond' or 'external to' the world. And philosophical reflection upon the inner nature of the world itself shows it in fact to be lacking in a morally acceptable design, and human existence, along with other phenomenal manifestations of the will, to be doomed to perpetual conflict and suffering. Thus metaphysics, truly conceived in the Schopenhauerian sense, can provide ethics with no basis or

yardstick, if by this is meant either the known purpose of a supreme moral being or (alternatively) a set of self-subsistent objective values mysteriously embedded in the fabric of ultimate reality.

Is this to say, though, that moral philosophy must altogether dispense with the idea of providing any sort of metaphysical foundation for ethical beliefs, the moral standpoints we accept having simply to be regarded as a brute datum, not susceptible to further philosophical explanation or justification, and intelligible without reference to anything beyond themselves? Schopenhauer considers this suggestion, only to reject it. On such a view we should be forced back upon the adoption of a purely 'analytical' procedure, which would have the result of confining us wholly within the sphere of empirical psychology. But that could satisfy nobody genuinely concerned with the credentials of morality. Even if the old supports have proved rotten, the assurance remains that ethics itself can never collapse; but how can this be, if we are to suppose that it floats in empty air or that it is no more than a phenomenon of the human brain? As Kant remarked, 'metaphysics must precede, and is in every case indispensable to, moral philosophy'; and it is to Kant himself that we might naturally turn in the problem that now confronts us. For quite apart from his achievements in unmasking the fallacies which invalidate all demonstrations of God and the immortality of the soul, he also undertook the task of providing a fresh foundation for morals in place of the ones he had so conspicuously undermined. Unfortunately, however, he was here less successful, for all that his 'Categorical Imperative' had in many quarters come to be treated as a convenient cushion against which ethics could henceforth rest its head in comfortable and undisturbed repose. Because of the uncritical acceptance which Kant's moral theories had found among a large number of people, including academic philosophers, it was necessary to subject them to a thorough re-examination, exposing their grave defects. In the first part of his book, *On the Foundation of Morality*, Schopenhauer accordingly, and with the air of one performing a public service, volunteers such a re-appraisal. What he has to say is conveyed

in his most characteristic polemical style: tart, incisive, ironical.

Kantian Morality

Schopenhauer's objections to the Kantian philosophy of morals can be fairly briefly summarized. In the first place he thinks that Kant must be given credit for certain things: he tried, for example, to confute the claim that virtue should be pursued on the grounds that it is a means to, or identical with, happiness, while at the same time making it plain that human conduct possesses a deep inner significance over and above its merely phenomenal manifestations in the world of sensory experience; these features of his theory endow his conclusions with a certain 'moral purity and sublimity' which has greatly contributed to the widespread appeal of his ideas and has helped to blind his readers to the shaky structure of the argument itself. The latter involves a liberal use of unproved and often highly questionable assumptions, and it is expressed in a terminology often vague or stretched to the point of actual meaninglessness. Thus at the very start Kant introduces the concept of *law* as being the central concept of ethics, without ever examining properly the source of this claim or investigating its credentials. Yet its source is in fact only too apparent: is it not manifestly rooted in divine-law conceptions of moral obligation, of the sort which can ultimately be traced back to the Mosaic Decalogue? In other words we are back to 'theological morals' – although with an important difference which impugns Kant's entire 'legalistic' procedure. For Kant, in his employment of the notion of moral law, separates the concept from the conditions which originally made its use an intelligible one. Not merely is it untrue that 'imperatival' ideas like those of *law* and *command* are part of the essence of the ethical significance which men have at all times recognized (if obscurely) to belong to human conduct; Schopenhauer also insists that, when separated from the 'theological hypotheses' from which they have sprung, these concepts actually lose all meaning', and that to try to provide a substitute, as Kant does, by talking of '*absolute* obligation' and '*unconditioned* duty' is simply to feed the reader

with empty phrases (*FM* §4). For all notions of the kind with which Kant is here concerned, being derivative from the concept of law, presuppose in their original and proper employment the conception of a superior power capable of backing its decrees by reward or punishment. In support of this contention, Schopenhauer cites Locke as saying that 'since it would be utterly in vain to suppose a rule set to the free actions of man without annexing it to some enforcement of good and evil to determine his will; we must, wherever we suppose a law, suppose also some reward or punishment annexed to that law'.[1] Yet it is just this condition that Kant – with his distinction between 'hypothetical' imperatives that tell us what to do if there is something which we are anxious to obtain or avoid, and 'categorical' imperatives that are binding absolutely and irrespective of consequences – attempted to eliminate from the consideration of moral rules. And he was led thereby into talking nonsense.

The general argument underlying this objection may be questioned. Schopenhauer may or may not be right when he asserts that the concept of moral law to which Kant appeals derives from religious beliefs in rules promulgated by a divine legislator with sanctions attached. There may be grounds, too, for challenging the exclusively legalistic or juridical structure in terms of which Kantian ethics is framed. But the claim that the whole notion of *law* as Kant uses it is utterly unintelligible because it has been cut off from its 'original' meaning, or because it is not employed in conformity with criteria determining its sense in other contexts (e.g. political or administrative ones), seems high-handed, to say the least. It is after all not uncommon for terms in the course of time to acquire new uses connected with, though different from, those they initially possessed; to proscribe such uses as unacceptable merely on the ground that they differ from the old would appear an odd procedure. Nor is it true (it might further be argued) that the Kantian notion, in so far as it implies the possibility of subscribing to moral laws not acknowledged to have been laid down by a recognized divine authority with special powers of

1. *Essay Concerning the Human Understanding*, Book II, Ch. 33, §6.

coercion or persuasion, is an altogether strange or unfamiliar one; analogues to such a conception may be found, not only in the moral thinking of religious sceptics at various different historical periods, but also among believers who have judged God's decrees to be right according to an independently ascertainable moral standard.

We should not, however, let slip from view the main point of Schopenhauer's opposition to Kantian morality. Schopenhauer sees Kant above all as a man in the grip of an attitude which – though at a theoretical level he had emancipated himself from it – continued at the level of practice to hold him and to govern the direction of his inquiries. Thus theological ideas and modes of thought, which on the surface he appeared to have abandoned, in reality still exerted a very powerful influence upon his intellect, constantly finding their way into his ethical writings under cover of bizarre, but none the less penetrable, disguises. From this point of view he may be compared, Schopenhauer thinks, to a man at a ball who throughout the whole evening has been flirting with a masked beauty in the hope of making a conquest, little realizing that the woman to whom his advances are directed is really his wife. That Kant was unaware of what he was doing there can be no doubt; otherwise he would not have committed himself so wholeheartedly to the mistakes involved in his own special contribution to moral philosophy – the doctrine of the Categorical Imperative. This doctrine must now be examined in more detail.

Schopenhauer begins by pointing out that in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* Kant undertook to provide an *a priori* foundation of ethics; any other type of account, such as one which relied simply on knowledge relating to the nature of man, his disposition and propensities, would be purely contingent and hence lack the requisite feature of demonstrating that 'rational beings in general' are subject, and necessarily subject, to the moral law. Thus it would not be enough merely to show, for example, that the moral principle is an attested fact of human consciousness; this is not at all what he had in mind, despite allegations to the contrary by some of his later German interpreters and commentators. But here two difficulties im-

mediately arise. First, what is to be made of the notion of 'all possible rational beings'? This idea was certainly very dear to Kant, and was intimately connected with his belief that the ultimate principle of morals must be based, not on feeling, but solely on 'Reason'. But in the context it is an extremely artificial one; in morals we are concerned with human individuals, not with strange, scarcely conceivable creatures subsisting in the realm of a philosopher's imagination. Secondly, and more important, what kind of *a priori* validity does Kant envisage the fundamental principle of morality to possess, and in what manner are we supposed to be subject to it? On analogy with the structural 'synthetic *a priori*' principles which he has asserted lie at the foundation of our experience and knowledge of the world, Kant here introduces the idea that there is likewise a *practical* synthetic *a priori* principle which is capable of determining our actions. It follows, however, that a principle of the sort postulated can contain only formal elements or concepts, that is to say 'simply shells without kernels': yet such a principle, we are told, would be capable of serving as the basis of morals and of withstanding all the forces of human passion and selfish desire. That Kant should have embraced such an opinion is certainly, Schopenhauer considers, a matter for regret; it is, however – given his preoccupation with 'reason', together with his refusal to allow that actions endowed with true moral worth can be empirically motivated – not inexplicable. For to have assigned to his principle a determinate empirical content would have been tantamount to depriving it of that *a priori* rational necessity which on his view, was absolutely requisite if it was to represent a final, unshakable foundation for ethics. But if it was to be purely formal in the sense described, then it appeared to Kant that the key to its nature must lie in the concept of *conformity to law*. And is not the latter notion in its turn constructed from the idea of what is valid for all persons equally? Hence the substance of the principle could be drawn, pure and unalloyed, out of the abstract concept of universal validity, and would run: 'Act only in accordance with that maxim which you can also will to be a universal law for all rational beings', this being nothing less

than Kant's Categorical Imperative in its initial formulation. The principle in question has thus been evolved solely in accordance with the demands of theoretical ratiocination, and quite independently of so-called 'practical' reason.

Having thus, so he believes, reconstructed the actual process of thought whereby Kant was led to his results, Schopenhauer goes on to criticize both the proposed rule itself and the manner in which Kant tried to derive more specific obligations from it. As it stands, the rule offers no guidance whatsoever concerning how a man should act in a given situation. If it is claimed that it at least tells him to do that which he can 'will' that all men should do in the type of situation confronting him, the answer is that the problem remains exactly where it was. For everything must now turn on *what* he can truly will, and – in the present context at any rate – it would seem that he requires a further principle or criterion to determine this. So far as the natural course of events goes, it appears that egoism, involving the thought of his own advantage, is most likely to govern a man's judgement; a consideration which Kant, in at least one of his derivations of particular duties, apparently accepts with equanimity. For he argues that nobody can will the maxim not to help others in distress as a universal law, since he would thereby 'deprive himself of all hope of the support which he himself desires'. This is curious enough in a writer who lays so much stress on disinterestedness in moral conduct; it is even more curious that Kant should not have entertained the possibility that a man might be sufficiently confident of his own bodily and mental strength as never to envisage himself as requiring the assistance or sympathy of others, thus being perfectly able to will the maxim in question as a general rule of behaviour. Nor are the various other formulations of the Categorical Imperative Kant puts forward any better. For instance, Schopenhauer considers the principle that one should act so as to treat other people as ends in themselves, never as means: here he begins by finding fault with Kant's terminology – what is meant, for instance, by an 'end in itself', and how is it distinguished from a simple 'end'?; he goes on to draw attention to the extreme vagueness and indeterminacy of

the rule – stated so unspecifically, plausible exceptions to it can easily be found – and he concludes by asking whether it is, in reality, more than a very artificial and circuitous attempt to re-express the fairly familiar point that one should give due consideration to the needs and claims of others. As for the 'human dignity' to which Kant attributes an 'unconditioned incomparable worth', these are doubtless fine rhetorical phrases, but he should have paid closer attention to the words he was using. All evaluation involves the estimation of something by reference to something else, the concept of worth being essentially one of comparison, of relative assessment; thus to speak baldly of 'absolute worth' is, in the absence of further explanation, to risk using words to express what is by its nature unthinkable, in the fashion of a man who talked as if there existed a 'highest number'.

Schopenhauer implies, however, that it is unlikely that any criticism would have moved Kant, for he was in love with the structure he had built up, haunted as it is by ghosts of the theological morality to which, for all his disclaimers, he was still secretly wedded. Everything he wrote on ethical topics was shot through with the ideas of command, reverence, and submission: in consequence he was prepared to go to the length of claiming that no action had genuinely moral worth unless done for the sake of duty or respect for the law, and of suggesting that feelings of compassion or sympathy may actually prove troublesome to right-thinking persons by confusing them on the subject of their own carefully weighed and considered maxims – ideas which Schopenhauer holds to be utterly repugnant to true moral sentiment. Presiding, in fact, over all Kant's theories broods the conception of an oracular legislating Reason, frequently elevated to the status of a hypostatized independent entity hidden in the recesses of the human soul, and forever issuing infallible judgements and decrees. But it is perhaps in his specific doctrine of conscience that the underlying tendencies of Kant's thought manifest themselves most plainly, for in his exposition of this we once more find him using a thoroughly legal terminology – a terminology which incidentally is peculiarly ill-adapted to the description of the most

secret workings of the human heart – and see him bring on to the stage of the inner self 'an entire court of justice, complete with indictment, judge, plaintiff, defendant, and verdict' (*FM* §9). He suggests, moreover, that we are bound to think of the judge in this mythical court-drama, not merely as possessing some sort of independent status with respect to ourselves, but also as one whose knowledge has no limits and whose right to obedience is absolute. The fact that in such passages Kant does not claim to be offering an objective truth, but only to be delineating a subjectively necessary form of thought, in no way detracts from the significance of the imagery he employs.

When all these factors are taken into account, we are forced, Schopenhauer concludes, to recognize the extreme inadequacy of the Kantian theory; in a general way it cannot be considered to provide any guidance in the matter that concerns us. Yet there is one respect in which what Kant had to say in the field of morality bears directly upon our problem, and can be seen to be of the utmost relevance. Here Schopenhauer refers to Kant's theory of freedom, and to the distinction therein drawn between the two points of view from which we can look at ourselves, so that under one aspect we appear as phenomena subject to strict causal necessity and under the other as members of the 'intelligible world' of things-in-themselves. The importance Schopenhauer accorded this distinction in connexion with the development of his own philosophy as a whole has already been emphasized, together with the errors which he believed marred Kant's formulation of it. The same distinction can now be applied in the present more specific context, with equally fruitful results. For to understand morals we must understand ourselves, and moreover understand ourselves in a manner which embraces a deeper and wider view than that afforded from the standpoint of mere empirical psychology: our comprehension, in other words, must be of a metaphysical kind. Schopenhauer makes it clear, however, that his use of the Kantian distinction to illuminate the status of human beings as moral agents in the world will have very different implications from those Kant himself drew. In particular, it will not

involve the conception of such agents as continually imposing upon themselves, and submitting to, rules formulated at the behest of a supremely rational authority embedded in their own hearts (and perhaps in the heart of reality as well). And that is all to the good, for all philosophical difficulties apart, Kant's doctrine that truly virtuous actions proceed solely from a 'deliberative will that has in view only the law' must intuitively strike us as being utterly perverse; it is almost as if he had asserted that every work of art can only originate in the carefully-considered application of aesthetic rules. Yet both in art and in ethics the opposite is the truth: here as in other respects Schopenhauer holds that artistic ability and moral virtue resemble one another.

Responsibility and the Problem of Freedom

In essentials Schopenhauer's analysis of the problem of moral freedom is very much what we would expect in the light of his earlier asseverations concerning action in general and its relation to the will: it was indeed his intention that his ethical doctrine should in all its aspects be seen to form an integral part of his system as a whole. Here, for example, we find him once more attacking the assumption that in conformity with certain rationally or intellectually conceived notions of what we should become, how we should behave, we can effectively determine in advance the course of our own conduct or alter the characteristic patterns of our lives and personalities. And here, too, it is noticeable that he is not prepared to treat popular opinion or 'common sense' as his final yardstick, or to regard the concepts and speech-habits which tend faithfully to reflect such ordinary beliefs as if they were sacrosanct. For he thinks that on closer inspection it will turn out that the significance of the kind of introspective data principally appealed to in discussions of human freedom has frequently been misconstrued; for this reason alone, we should not exclude the possibility that the language in which we are accustomed to express ourselves in the domains of deliberation and choice may be positively misleading, or that it may at least be open to a different interpretation from that most commonly put upon it.

As a philosophical doctrine the theory that all human behaviour is in some manner rigorously 'determined' has a long history, although very different reasons have been adduced in its support. It has, for instance, sometimes been argued for on the basis of purely scientific, or supposedly scientific, considerations; at other times on the basis of historical ones; and at others again on grounds supplied by comprehensive metaphysical explanations concerning the underlying structure of the world and man's place in this structure. And corresponding to these distinguishable modes of substantiation one finds a similar variety among the types of necessitation to which human actions, along with everything else in the universe, have been held to be subject: thus, besides the notion of causal determination regarded as presupposing the operation of invariant empirical laws, other concepts – for example, of logical or quasi-logical necessity – have also been employed. But whatever the kind of determinism proposed, it has usually (though not always) been assumed that such theories have important and very unpalatable implications so far as conventional ideas of human freedom are concerned. For if it is indeed true that all human actions and choices are really the products of an ineluctable necessity, of whatever kind, this must surely mean that it is impossible that we can ever act and choose in ways different from those in which we in fact do act and choose: how then can we properly continue to regard ourselves as free self-determining agents to whom moral responsibility for our conduct may legitimately be ascribed?

Now Schopenhauer maintained that from one point of view the claims of philosophical determinism were absolutely justified. Nevertheless, the interpretation he provided of the deterministic doctrine was of a peculiar character, comprising both empirical and metaphysical elements in a way that made it possible (so he thought) to reconcile the theory with a belief in ultimate human liberty and responsibility, and thus confirming the original Kantian insight that although, phenomenally viewed, every human action is susceptible of a complete explanation, 'in ourselves' or 'noumenally' we can at the same time be held to be free. In explaining how such a reconciliation

may be accomplished, Schopenhauer first seeks to demonstrate that various familiar arguments which have been used in an effort to undermine the determinists' case are quite unacceptable; it will then be shown that the evidence upon which they rest can be entirely accounted for and rendered intelligible within the framework of his own theory. Consider, for instance, the well-known libertarian objection that the experience of free volition is a fundamental datum of self-consciousness which no philosophical theory can eliminate or explain away: Schopenhauer criticizes Maine de Biran, among others, for employing this argument. For what does it really amount to? To start with, it is far from being transparently clear why such psychical or 'internal' experiences should be thought to be self-guaranteeing in the way propounders of the objection in question seem to assume that they are. For what determinism, at any rate in its most plausible form, requires us to believe is that any action performed by any individual under any circumstances conforms with strict necessity to the causal principle to which all natural phenomena are subject; as such, its concern is solely with the *objective causal relations* according to which phenomenal occurrences and events are connected with one another – that is to say, with matters which properly lie outside the domain of interior self-consciousness and feelings. It does not even appear inconceivable that we might enjoy experiences of complete freedom of choice of the sort libertarians are fond of attributing to us, and yet for all that still be causually determined in everything we do in the manner described. But though not perhaps inconceivable, such an idea is scarcely one that we can be expected to entertain seriously; we can hardly believe what is given in self-consciousness to be wholly misleading or deceptive concerning our true nature when that is objectively viewed. We may therefore consider another possibility, namely, that the introspective data have been wrongly understood and misinterpreted; and this suggestion Schopenhauer holds to be in fact the right one. Accordingly, in the second chapter of his essay, *On the Freedom of the Will*, he undertakes an analysis which, he thinks, places the supposed 'inner experience of freedom' in a true light.

Schopenhauer begins his analysis with the observation that he certainly does not wish to deny that we have an inward (i.e. non-perceptual) consciousness of 'acts of will' which express themselves outwardly in observable behaviour: is this not indeed a conception fundamental to his entire system? And one can – if one so desires – make articulate this primitive ineliminable datum of consciousness in the form of words 'I can do what I will', always bearing in mind, however, that my will and the action or actions in which it 'objectifies' itself externally are not related to one another as cause and effect. Further, it is likewise indisputable that in a given situation we are often aware that there is more than one possible course of action open to us, in the sense that we know of no external impediment or obstacle capable of preventing us from performing action X rather than action Y, should we want to do so. But neither of these admissions should be confused with the quite separate claim that, on any particular occasion or in any particular set of circumstances, we know that we could will, and therefore act, in a manner different from the one in which we do will and act; the libertarian thesis, in so far as it purports to be derived from the evidence of self-awareness, rests upon a misapprehension of the facts, upon an illusion. Certainly it is true that, before embarking upon a course of action, we are often wholly unsure what we shall do when the moment for action arrives; as Schopenhauer characteristically puts it, the direction of our will is known, really known, not *a priori* but only *a posteriori* – that is, when or after the 'act of will' in the Schopenhauerian sense occurs. Certainly, too, we frequently find ourselves successively envisaging various possible lines of conduct, each in turn appearing in its own way to have attractive features or consequences and each, as it passes before the mind, momentarily seeming capable of influencing the will sufficiently strongly to lead us to do the action in question. Thus Schopenhauer pictures a man at the end of a day's work considering the various things he might do: he could go for a walk, or visit his club; again, he could go to the theatre, or perhaps see some friends; he could even leave town altogether, venturing forth into the wide world, never to return: but

rather than do any of these things, all of which are open to him, he will act differently and entirely of his own volition go home to his wife. Viewing the situation in this light, and allowing each possibility as it presents itself to him to exert its particular pull upon his inclinations, such a man may easily persuade himself that the thing he finishes by doing was not inevitable, that he certainly could have 'willed' to take another course, and that the course he did take was finally determined by nothing except his own free choice. But what does he mean when he speaks of his own free choice here? That what he did was in accordance with his will? This is not being denied. That his will depends upon himself, and that he alone wills what he wills? That also is not being denied; it scarcely could be, for it is a mere tautology. None of this, however, goes one inch towards proving that the man in question, being the individual he is and being confronted at that specific point in space and time with those particular possibilities of action, could have chosen to behave otherwise than he did; a conclusion he himself would have reached if he had considered the matter more deeply and had not allowed himself to be beguiled by false reasoning.

In certain respects what Schopenhauer is saying here recalls a form of objection sometimes raised against the analysis G. E. Moore once proposed for the expression 'I could have done otherwise'. Moore argued that this may mean no more than 'I would have acted differently if I had chosen to', and suggested that if so, what those who deny that we have free will could be understood to be 'really denying' is 'that we ever *should* have acted differently even if we had willed differently'.[1] To this it may be answered (as Moore himself recognized) that the question on which the free-will issue essentially turns is not the question of what we should have done *if* we had willed or chosen differently, but the question of whether we *could* have willed or chosen differently. In the same way Schopenhauer explicitly grants that in the case he has described the man may certainly believe, and believe rightly, that if he had willed something different – say, to go to the theatre – he would not

1. G. E. Moore, *Ethics*, Ch. V.

have acted as he did. But, far from thinking that this solves the problem of human freedom in favour of free will, he claims that it is irrelevant to it. And on the vital point, the question of the power of choice itself, he further argues (as has been seen) that the suggestion that we should consider the problem specifically from the point of view of the agent faced with making a decision between alternatives does not, when adopted, lend evidence in support of the libertarian's case. For it is not after all true that a sense or conviction of being able to choose in more than one way is intrinsic to the agent's point of view as a necessary and ineliminable element – or not, at least, in the manner it is sometimes alleged to be.

It may be allowed that traditional libertarians, in their references to a basic 'experience' or 'feeling' of freedom, have often expressed themselves in vague and perhaps unfortunate terms. On the other hand, Schopenhauer's own attempt to demolish their position by showing it to be founded upon nothing but a kind of psychologically-induced illusion has very curious features, which largely stem from his determination to exhibit human nature and consciousness in all its aspects as conforming to the pattern he has prescribed for it in his general theory. Here, as previously when he was combating the conception of man as a being essentially subject to the control of his own intellect or reason, he often appears intent upon interpreting concepts relating to deliberation and decision in a way that subordinates them to, or rather absorbs them within, the (for him) more fundamental ideas of prediction and the anticipation of pre-determined consequences. And it is just this which gives to much of what he says its air of paradox, making it hard to see how, generally speaking, we could conceive our role in contexts of practical choice in the manner he suggests that we should. For if we recall for a moment Schopenhauer's positive account of practical deliberation, it will be remembered that he sometimes presents such deliberation in terms which, though possibly applicable in cases where we are in doubt, or are trying to foresee, how another person will decide or act in a given situation, seem to be largely inappropriate in cases where the decision to be taken is our own. Thus he often tends to

write as if the kind of uncertainty concerning our future course of action that is involved here were basically an uncertainty concerning what will happen in the natural course of things; it is as if we were to say of an upright beam which has lost its balance that it 'can fall either to the right or to the left', the word 'can' registering our ignorance of the facts: if the latter were known, we could predict with assurance what is really bound to occur (I, p. 375). Similarly, he speaks of weighing against one another the various motives and considerations that are likely to count with our wills when the moment or opportunity for action arrives, and on the basis of such 'data' making a forecast. He admits, it is true, that in all deliberation prior to action it is important that we should set before ourselves 'in the clearest light' the various factors that may bear upon our choice, so that 'each motive may exert its full influence upon the will when the time arrives', and lest as a result of some 'intellectual' error the will may be led into doing something which it would not otherwise have done (I, pp. 375–6). Beyond this, however, there is (it seems) nothing further we can do to 'assist the choice', and we can only passively await the outcome.

Now it may be objected to this oddly detached account that it tends to obliterate, or at least to obscure, the crucial differences which divide theoretical problems from practical ones: in particular, that it obscures the distinction between being uncertain in the sense of not knowing *what is going to occur* (because, say, of lack of conclusive information or evidence) and being uncertain in the sense of not knowing *what to do* (where one regards oneself as an agent capable of intentionally intervening in the world and initiating changes). It may be true that these types of uncertainty are not wholly unconnected; for example, it is arguable that in so far as a man considers something to represent a genuine practical problem calling for a decision on his part, he cannot be absolutely sure, on independent empirical grounds, that he will in any case act in a particular way when the time comes, since, if he were sure, this would be tantamount to his treating the matter as being in some sense outside his control. The fact remains, nevertheless, that

when in the normal way a man describes himself as not knowing, or as trying to make up his mind, what course of action he will adopt in a given predicament, he is not naturally interpreted as merely expressing uncertainty concerning the direction of his future behaviour, in the manner of one who lacks sufficient data to predict with confidence what will happen when a particular eventuality arises; it is not as though he were wondering whether if he took a certain drug he would go to sleep, or whether he would faint when he next had to watch an operation. And these considerations, it might be claimed, are related to a further peculiarity of Schopenhauer's conception of deliberation. While, in trying to envisage how another will act in a certain contingency, I may be content simply to consider the factors which (on my knowledge of his personality) I think likely to weigh with him and affect his choice, the way in which I take account of my *own* reasons for acting in a situation requiring a decision by me cannot be of this aloof speculative character. For in the latter case the factors I consider must present themselves to me as grounds *for* or *against* doing a particular thing. The question before me, in other words, is not (or not primarily) one of what factors are most *likely* to determine my course of conduct; rather, it is one of what considerations I now endorse or accept as justifying or ruling out some specific line of action. Even if I am aware from past experience that certain kinds of consideration are liable to prove decisive with me, I may still ask myself whether I should now allow them to govern the choice I am called upon to make, such reflections possibly forming an important element in the deliberations on which I engage. No doubt, when wondering what to do, I weigh considerations against one another in an attempt to estimate their relative force; but it is a mistake to regard such an assessment as if it were no more than an attempt on my part to reach an opinion concerning how I shall probably behave when the time comes. Essentially I treat them as something upon which I have to found a choice, not a forecast; if I can be said in such circumstances to make a forecast at all, it will be because I have already chosen. Nor, again, is it plausible to regard what I do when deliberating as analogous to what I do

when I lay certain factors before another person, leaving him to choose, and I myself merely forming conjectures as to how he will act. For doesn't such a comparison contradict the whole notion of making up one's mind?

If we follow out the implications of this line of reasoning, we may be led to the conclusion (which perhaps lies behind the traditional libertarian appeal to self-consciousness) that we cannot adopt towards our own actions and decisions a purely 'predictive' attitude of the kind it frequently seems natural enough to adopt towards those of others. Nor can we treat our own personalities, our own dispositions and motivational tendencies, as if they constituted something unalterably fixed and 'given', determining what we shall do in the future as inexorably as they are held to have determined what we have done in the past. These points, which are emphasized in much existentialist thought and which are implicit within the Sartrean distinction between 'being for oneself' and 'being for others', are nevertheless explicitly denied by Schopenhauer, and his refusal to accept them colours, not only his theoretical philosophy as it concerns human nature, but also the practical consequences he drew from that philosophy. The key to his position was in fact summarily expressed by him in the formula *Operari sequitur esse.* What, in non-scholastic terms, does such a doctrine amount to?

Schopenhauer's starting point is the concept of *character*: we have, he thinks, only to reflect upon this crucial notion, and upon the facts of human existence which make it a possible, and even an indispensable one, to recognize the force of the determinist thesis in its application both to others and to ourselves. In the course of our lives, for instance, we are constantly being reminded of the extent to which our behaviour conforms to familiar patterns, of the manner in which our responses to typical situations do not change, but remain stable and consistent. Thus, if we are observant and honest, we cannot avoid coming to learn what we are like, much as we come to know what others are like; and just as in the light of such knowledge we attribute various personal qualities and characteristics to them, so we form similar estimates of our own dispositions. In

other words, what is chiefly involved when we refer to a person's empirical character is the general fashion in which he tends to conduct himself and behave over the whole range of his activities, in all departments of his life, having in mind not merely his past performances but his future ones as well; we do not refer to a man's character simply as a way of explaining why on a particular occasion he *did* act in a certain fashion, but also as a reason for holding that there are things which, if or when the opportunity for doing them arises, he *would* or *will* do. In ordinary thought alone, then, a man's character is conceived of as imposing very great restrictions upon his possibilities of choice and action, and philosophically the idea can be extended much further. From the latter standpoint the character of a person must, in consistency, be thought of as determining his behaviour in every detail; we shall – if we reflect carefully – be driven to the conclusion that, given the presence of certain 'motives' (whether these take the form of things actually perceived in the situation before him or whether they take the form of intellectually-imagined possibilities of future action and gratification), a man will, by virtue of his character, respond to them in a manner that is in principle entirely predictable, even if in practice we are not (because, say, of ignorance of certain relevant circumstances) able to make the prediction. Nor should we refuse to accept this conclusion so far as our own conduct is concerned; each must realize that in his own case the same interaction between motives and character always occurs, without exception.

In general it can be said to have been Schopenhauer's contention that a man's character never changes, but remains permanently the same throughout the whole course of his life; it may appear to undergo alterations or modifications, but that is an illusion. Doubtless it quite often happens that someone behaves in a manner unlike that in which he has previously tended to behave, and when this occurs we are inclined to be content to say that he has simply 'acted out of character'. But such phrases conceal the true explanation, which always lies in some difference in the circumstances, never in the character itself. To give a simple kind of case: a man may have acted in

an unexpected or surprising fashion because, unknown to his friends or acquaintances, he now finds himself in possession of information of which he was ignorant before; thus, while the goal or ultimate direction of his behaviour remains unaltered he is now aware of a more effective or subtler means of achieving his ends, which he uses. Schopenhauer does not want to deny that factual knowledge (for instance) – whether, as with children, inculcated or imparted, or whether acquired by adults in the normal course of their experience – often produces profound effects on the things people do, the ways they manage their lives: his only point is that such factors cannot in the smallest degree affect the underlying tendencies to action which constitute the innate disposition of a man. These tendencies, however variously they may manifest themselves in response to differing motives or states of a man's knowledge, are not themselves susceptible to change or alteration: *velle non discitur*. Thus once again Schopenhauer draws the conclusion that it is impossible for anyone, by some voluntary effort or resolution in advance, to make himself into something different from what he is. What, on the other hand, he *can* do is to discover through the observation of his own behaviour and reactions to situations the nature and limitations of his personality, and grow to an acceptance of these. Inasmuch as such acquiescence is held to represent a form of free decision, this consequence may seem an odd one, for on Schopenhauer's own theory it is hard to see how a man could ever freely choose to acquiesce rather than not. The fact remains, nevertheless, that he attaches considerable importance to the idea, as emerges from his discussion of what he calls 'acquired character'. A man of 'acquired character' is not, as might at first sight be supposed, a man who has deliberately achieved the kind of character he thinks he ought to have; for that has been ruled out as inconceivable. Instead he is one who has come fully to understand his actual character as it has unfolded itself to him through experience, and who is thereby enabled to carry out in a methodical manner the 'role' which uniquely belongs to his own person, without being continually sidetracked or ensnared by delusive hopes and wishes, or led astray by the impossible

belief that he might by his own efforts become something other than he is. Schopenhauer speaks of such a man as one might of an actor who has learnt the part assigned to him in a play and who performs it 'artistically and methodically, with firmness and grace' (*FW* §3); reconciled to his role, he will not think of stepping outside the limits which he recognizes through self-knowledge to be his, the knowledge in question always prompting him to behave in appropriate ways. For those who seek to model their behaviour on that of others, trying to imitate their qualities or idiosyncrasies, Schopenhauer expresses contempt; apart from the absurdity of trying to be what one is not, such attempts are really tantamount to a 'judgement of our own worthlessness pronounced by ourselves' (I, p. 395). On the other hand, to recognize and accept the unalterable necessity governing our own natures and capacities as empirical beings – while it is not (as some philosophers have pretended) to realize an allegedly superior form of 'real freedom' – is at least to take the only reasonable path that lies before us.

Schopenhauer was deeply and understandably fascinated by the continuity and consistency of response manifested in most human lives, believing that here there was something to be marvelled at and investigated rather than simply taken for granted; and he praised Shakespeare in particular for his acute penetration in this regard. Even so, there are difficulties in the conclusions Schopenhauer drew from the facts that so forcibly impressed him. Does it, for example, follow in every case from a person's actions being predictable that he was determined or compelled (causally or otherwise) to perform them? That would hardly appear to be self-evident; yet Schopenhauer invariably speaks as if it were. Again, the thesis of determinism, when expressed in the form of character-motive interaction, has curiously elastic features which make it hard to see what could conceivably count against it. Every apparent exception is either explained away, on the ground that some undetected (and perhaps undetectable) difference must have been present in the circumstances of the person's action, or else is interpreted as showing that previously-formed estimates of the person's character were incorrect: however someone behaves, what he

does must still conform to, and be the inevitable product of, that which he unalterably was from the beginning. There remain, moreover, further problems, fundamental from Schopenhauer's own point of view. For instance, if he claims – as he does – that the pattern of an individual's behaviour may radically change under certain conditions (as a result, say, of training or a widening of his experience), can one attach a clear sense to the claim that his character and the ultimate ends he pursues none the less always remain constant? It seems curious too, that a philosopher who appeals so persistently to self-consciousness, to our unique awareness of ourselves 'from within', so that he may exhibit the underlying nature of reality stripped of the illusory forms imposed by the principle of sufficient reason, should at the same time be ready to adopt a conception of human behaviour as heavily impregnated with causal ideas as the one put forward, and should treat it as if we could apply it as comfortably to ourselves as to others. And what, on such an account, becomes of notions like those of responsibility, of praise and blame – notions Schopenhauer himself admits to be central to the discussion of ethics? Can it still be justifiable to apply such notions to human beings and human actions, while at the same time claiming that the things people do are not less rigorously determined than events in the non-human world?

Questions like these lead us back into the depths of Schopenhauer's metaphysics: he believed them to be answerable by reference to his distinction, adapted from Kant, between the empirical and 'intelligible' characters. The intelligible character is, of course, the will, or rather (it appears) a particular noumenal 'act of the will'; as he puts it, 'the intelligible character of every man is to be regarded as an act of will outside time, and therefore indivisible and unchangeable, and the manifestation of this act of will, developed and deployed in time and space and all the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, is the empirical character' (I, p. 373). By introducing the idea of the intelligible character in this sense Schopenhauer thought that he could explain a number of points that arose from his exposition of human existence as presented so

far. In the first place, while he wanted to emphasize that every person shares a common nature, not merely with his fellow human beings but also, at the deepest level, with everything else in the phenomenal world, he at the same time wished to do justice to the variety of determinate forms in which the all-embracing will phenomenally exhibits itself. In the case of animals, for example, there are a number of different species, each species embodying a definite 'Idea', and each individual member of the species partaking, though inadequately, in this Idea. Where the individual in question is a human being, however, there is a further complication; for such an individual, as Schopenhauer explains in his theory of art, can be seen as displaying, in addition to the Idea of humanity in general, an Idea that is peculiar to himself. The latter Idea, which achieves distinct and final expression in artistic portrayal, has its ultimate source in a noumenal act of the kind just described; and it is on the basis of just such an assumption (not, incidentally, easy to reconcile with what has already been said about the limited scope of the *principium individuationis*) that Schopenhauer thinks it possible to account for the individuality which must be attributed to every human being and which is necessarily presupposed by all moral judgement. For each of us does regard himself as being in some sense uniquely responsible for the moral worth of the actions he performs, believing, moreover, that this moral worth attaches to his actions solely in virtue of their relation to himself, from whom they spring. It is true that what he does always depends in part upon the circumstances in which he is placed, and upon the state of his knowledge; there is therefore often a possibility of causing him to do certain things which he would not otherwise have done by bringing about changes in his circumstances and knowledge, and of thereby improving his behaviour from the point of view of its consequences for those around him. But utilitarian considerations like these are quite irrelevant to the moral value of his actions regarded as touching his inner disposition, and it is in this sense alone that they are properly subject to judgements of moral praise or blame: it is only too obvious that we should not accord high moral praise to an action, however useful or

socially beneficial, if we knew that the man was only induced to do it by his having been afforded an egoistic motive for its performance – say, a threat of disgrace or imprisonment, or the promise of reward in a future existence after death. Now empirically speaking, as we have seen, Schopenhauer considers a man's character to be something which he cannot choose for himself or create or shape through his own conscious efforts. It is a brute 'datum' of experience, like everything else that manifests itself in the phenomenal world; and he can only accept it for what it is. From this standpoint, then, he can no more regard himself as responsible for his nature than he can regard himself as responsible for the colour of his hair or the shape of his ears. But when (it is argued) he adopts another standpoint and thinks of his empirical character as being the expression of what he is 'in himself' – his inner will or intelligible character – the position is different. For to see oneself in this light is to see one's empirical self and behaviour as proceeding from that which, since it does not belong to the realm of phenomena or *Vorstellungen*, is not subject to the various forms of the principle of sufficient reason, and cannot therefore meaningfully be spoken of as being in any respect 'determined'. In other words, the will and all its operations are in themselves 'free', and (since each of us in his essence is constituted by one such operation) we partake of this freedom.

This mysterious doctrine offers a strange solution to the problem of ethical responsibility. Apart from anything else, the freedom postulated seems to give us no grounds for holding ourselves answerable for what we are and for what we do, in the way presupposed by ordinary moral judgements of praise and blame. It is scarcely helpful to say, with Schopenhauer, that we can at least know that 'we might have been otherwise' in the sense that no pre-existent conditions made it necessary that our 'intelligible characters' should be as they are. For we are still left with the question of whether we had any choice in the matter, and to such a question Schopenhauer's reply (it would seem) could only be negative. But however this may be, he certainly believed that our obscure if inarticulate sense of ourselves as responsible agents had a real foundation, and that

it found its explanation and justification in the theory he had propounded. The important thing was not to confuse this genuine inner conviction of responsibility with the wholly illusory supposition that our particular empirical acts are not the products of a strict necessity. Through such a confusion, many aspects of moral experience tend to be misunderstood; in particular, the phenomenon of conscience. It is often imagined that when a man feels remorse for what he has done, this implies that he feels that he could and should have acted in the circumstances otherwise than he did; but, according to Schopenhauer, this must be mistaken. In so far as the so-called 'pangs of conscience' we feel have a serious basis, it can only be that certain things we do reveal to us only too plainly what we are; 'anguish of conscience' is simply pain at the knowledge of oneself in one's inmost nature, together with the realization that this nature, which is the true subject of the ethical and the source from which all our actions spring, is unalterable. For ethical characteristics, whether virtuous or vicious, are 'innate and ineradicable'; 'the wicked man is born with his wickedness as the snake is born with its poison fangs and its sac of venom, and the one can as little change his nature as the other' (*FM* §20): the differences between human beings in respect of their inborn moral dispositions remain as permanent and fixed as the features which divide one species of creature from another. Those therefore who hope through conditioning or instruction to change the characters of men in any fundamental sense, as contrasted with merely giving them motives for acting in more tolerable ways, are fated to constant and inevitable disappointment; for the inner will lies beyond the range of both causal modification and rational suasion.

When discussing the status of the moral agent, Schopenhauer often returns to his point that important similarities exist between ethics and aesthetics: like the artist, the good man is born not made. But his theory of character may also call to mind another analogy. It is an analogy Schopenhauer himself recognized and alluded to, without apparently noticing, however, that in the light of it the kind of charge he brought against certain features of the Kantian ethic could with no less

plausibility be levelled against his own views. For might it not be claimed that a number of his ideas themselves seem to bear the imprint of a familiar theological creed: in this case, the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, and the associated dogma that by unalterable decree some men are chosen for salvation, others for damnation?

The Moral Consciousness

So far Schopenhauer's treatment of ethical matters has been largely negative; he has aimed principally at discrediting the presuppositions which underlie a great deal of traditional moral philosophy, especially the conception of the moral agent as a being capable of moulding his own character and manner of life by acts of free rational choice and conscious volition. Thus, many of the assumptions which constitute the accustomed stock-in-trade of ethical writers have been shown to rest upon an illusion. But there is now another aspect of the subject to be considered. For Schopenhauer, however much he believed it necessary to expose and pulverize the false constructions which theorists had put upon accepted ethical notions, did not wish to claim that these notions were themselves invalid. On the contrary, he thought they could be accounted for and justified; and thought this notwithstanding the fact that, by apparently effecting a total divorce between the roles of reason and freedom in practical life, he would seem to have rejected, not merely a certain type of philosophical theory, but also (it might be argued) something which is central to the whole concept of morality as ordinarily understood. Thus he assumes throughout his discussion of character that goodness and badness of disposition exist, as unquestionably as we have always supposed that they existed; what has so far been lacking has been a coherent and finally acceptable explanation of them. Such an explanation he now undertakes to provide, and to do so, moreover, in a manner which is consonant with, and helps to confirm, the essential tenets of his own system. For it will be found that the inner import and meaning of justice, of charity, and also – ultimately – of self-denial, can be satisfactorily exhibited through his original distinction between appearance and

reality in terms of *idea* and *will*. Here, one has the impression, is the crucial point towards which we have all the time been moving in what has gone before.

We must therefore once more recall the general position. The world as idea or representation is ultimately an illusory world – 'the veil of Māyā'. It does not present reality as it is in itself, i.e. as the unitary will, but only as it appears, fragmentary and broken, under the forms of the principle of sufficient reason; the type of knowledge governed by this principle being itself conceived as essentially determined by, and as the instrument of, the will. It follows that in so far as we view human life in accordance with the principle in question, we shall see ourselves as utterly separated from one another – objects among objects, individuals among individuals, each enclosed forever within the limits of his own particular existence. And such indeed is the general form that human consciousness, as it concerns men in their relations with one another, consistently takes; a form that finds concrete practical expression in *egoism*. Egoism in the practical sense certainly presupposes a view of things in which a man thinks of himself and of everyone else as distinct and separate phenomena; however, it presupposes something else as well. For one who is committed to the standpoint of egoism is committed to the further belief that he alone, out of all those innumerable others, is of importance and deserving of serious consideration. And this is a fact which can also (Schopenhauer thinks) be accounted for in the light of his general theory. In the first place, it is one of the conditions of ordinary perceptual knowledge, as he has described it, that for any observer subject to the *principium individuationis* there is only one point of view from which the world may be seen, this point being the one which he himself physically occupies; such an observer will thus naturally think of himself as standing at the centre of the world, as being so to speak its focus. Further, it is only of himself that he is immediately aware as *will*: all other things, including his fellow human beings, present themselves to him as mere 'ideas', representations. When such considerations are pressed philosophically, they are liable to issue in a doctrine Schopenhauer has elsewhere referred to as

'theoretical egoism', the view that other people are 'bare phantoms'. This doctrine, which is false, stems from the misinterpretation of a truth. For Schopenhauer has earlier maintained that everything in the phenomenal realm – the realm of objects, which includes other people regarded as spatio-temporal entities – can only exist as *Vorstellungen*, that is, as representations to a perceiving subject; hence there is a sense in which the only world that a given individual apprehends and knows, he bears within himself as the construction of his perceptual consciousness. The reasoning now becomes somewhat difficult to follow, but the gist of Schopenhauer's ensuing argument would seem to be this. Strictly from the point of view of each individual, it might well appear that everything depended upon his own personal existence: he himself is 'all in all' and contains the whole of reality. But as we have seen, Schopenhauer also held that what he referred to in general as the 'knowing subject' cannot as such be identified with the consciousness of any *particular* individual, for each and every individual is simply a 'bearer of the subject' in the sense that is here in question. It follows that the particular self, which considered purely 'subjectively' (i.e. from the standpoint of the individual or 'microcosm') can present itself under a gigantic aspect, so that the world as a whole – the 'macrocosm' – may seem to be a mere modification of the individual's own nature that will perish with him at his death, when looked at 'objectively' is such that it 'shrinks to almost nothing, namely to about one thousand millionth of the existing human race' (*FM* §14). And in actual fact no one in the ordinary way feels able to take seriously the proposition that he alone is real, when this is put to him as a theoretical truth, for the idea seems fantastic. At the practical level, however, where people in pursuit of their aims and interests come into conflict with other individuals pursuing theirs, the situation is otherwise. For here the comparatively direct consciousness we have of ourselves in our inner nature violently asserts itself against the purely representational awareness we have of others; hence we tend in our actions to behave as if the latter had no true existence in themselves, and to treat them, if not as figments, at least as no more

than means or obstacles to the things we want, to be manipulated or overcome as the case may be. And this is simply the overt expression of the idea which underlies all egoism as it here concerns us, an idea that can be rendered in the form 'Help nobody, but rather injure all people, if it brings you any advantage'.

Regarding egoism in general, Schopenhauer considers two things to be beyond question. First, it is the prime 'anti-moral incentive': conduct actuated by egoism is responsible for most of the wickedness and misery in the world. And even where this is not so, where even an egoistical action has a matter of fact beneficial consequences for others in addition to the agent himself (as sometimes happens), we cannot conceivably attribute to it any moral worth. For from a moral point of view – that is to say a point of view concerned solely with ethical judgement and the ascription of responsibility – we are not interested in the phenomenal effects of actions, but solely with the nature and character of the agent who performs them; consequently our attention must be concentrated upon what it was that prompted him to do what he did and not upon the results of his deed. In the second place, egoism is pervasive, a colossus that 'towers above the world'; it represents the basic mode in which the strivings of the will exhibit themselves in human affairs and relations, the sexual instinct itself appearing under shapes and guises that can all in the end be shown to conform to the pattern it endlessly prescribes. One might wonder, indeed, after taking account of the manner in which in various places Schopenhauer speaks both of the will itself and of its manifestations in human behaviour, how any action of a non-egoistical kind could occur at all. On this point, however, he leaves us in no doubt about his true opinion:

> Should anyone persist in refusing to believe that such actions ever happen, then, according to him, ethics would be a study without any real object, like astrology and alchemy, and it would be a waste of time to discuss its foundation any further. With him, therefore, I have nothing to do, and address myself to those who grant the reality of what is being talked about. (*FM* §15)

How are such actions possible? How can a man act in a disinterested way, so that what he does is done out of respect for the interests of others, even with a desire to promote those interests, to help those around him or alleviate their sufferings? This was, in a way, Kant's problem; but he answered it wrongly, by employing the juridical notion of law, while at the same time stripping that notion of the implications of superior power and sanctions which are essential to it. Yet if his procedure was misguided, the instinct which led him to adopt it was to some extent right. For to do something because one has been told to do it, and because one either fears the consequences of disobedience or desires the rewards of obedience, is to act not as a moral agent but as a self-interested one. Morality and legality must be distinguished, not confounded; Kant partly saw this, but – because of his theological obsessions – finished by trying to get the best of both worlds. To comprehend the need for making the distinction, one has only to consider the role of law as it functions in its natural habitat, the State. Political society, and the rules governing such society, find their source and rationale in egoism alone. Men form states purely as a means of protection from the incursions and aggressions to which they believe themselves to be exposed from the actions of their fellows: on this point Hobbes was entirely correct. It follows, Schopenhauer thinks, that the positive enactments of the state, the laws and decrees by which it fulfils the purpose for which it was designed, have as their single aim the prevention of the suffering of wrong by one individual at the hands of another, thereby mitigating the consequences of the *bellum omnium contra omnes* which Hobbes rightly saw to be the natural condition of human existence. And to give effect to such enactments, punishments and penalties are necessarily attached to their infringements, since there is no other way of ensuring their general observance. The sole purpose of punishment is thus deterrence and not (as Kant, for instance, maintained) partly retribution. Indeed, the whole conception of punishment as retribution is founded upon a primitive desire for revenge; and it is in any event actually wicked and arrogant, for no man can take it upon himself to be a 'purely moral judge and

requiter of another' in the manner implied by many upholders of the theory. Nor is there any force in the oft-repeated Kantian objection that on a deterrence view punishment involves treating a man as a 'mere means' and not as an 'end'. It is useless to appeal to so vague and indefinite principle in a context like the present one, and in any case the criminal, by infringing the rules of the society from which he has received the benefit of security and to the maintenance of which he was in a sense pledged, forfeits his right to the treatment due to a law-abiding citizen.

Schopenhauer holds, then, that the state is simply a contrivance formed for the convenience of men. For that reason it is absurd to exalt its nature and functions in the way that has in Germany become popular, as if it represented a quasi-divine entity capable of promoting 'the moral aims of mankind'. Yet German philosophers habitually talk in these terms, and in so doing display the characteristic failing of their race. For at the sound of certain expressions, of which 'the State' is one and 'Being' (*Sein*) – 'that vacuous infinitive of the copula' – another, Schopenhauer says that the German's head begins to swim: 'he at once plunges into a kind of delirium, and launches forth into meaningless high-sounding phrases, synthetically stringing together the most abstract and hence the emptiest concepts' (*Parerga*, II, p. 256). We should not be deceived by such verbiage, however; for any theory, of whatever kind, which involves the claim that the state is some sort of moral agency must be rejected. Let two things initially be granted: first, that both morality and civil legislation are concerned with the actions of men; and secondly, that both are concerned with such actions as affecting the welfare, the 'weal and woe', of other human beings. But now consider the differences. In ethics we are above everything interested in what a man does from the point of view of its 'inner significance'; that is, we look at it always in connexion with the character or disposition which is its source and from which it arises as the outward manifestation. From the standpoint of politics and the state, on the other hand, this sort of consideration is irrelevant; here the sole concern is with preventing men from suffering harm at the

hands of others, and with doing it in a way that is likely to be generally effective. All that matters, in other words, is that men should not act in a fashion liable to cause injuries to their neighbours or to threaten the security of their society; if they do, they should be stopped from committing similar crimes in the future, and others should be deterred from following their example. Further questions, which are of crucial importance ethically, such as whether many individuals, who in their actual conduct respect the interests of their fellows, would not indulge aggressive or murderous wishes against them if the fear of punishment and disgrace were removed, do not arise for the state in the normal course of events; the interests of the legal and judicial systems are purely pragmatic, they touch only 'what happens' – the 'deed' and its 'correlate', the latter being actual or possible suffering on the part of another.

Salutary though much of what Schopenhauer has to say on the subject of the state may be when considered beside the extravaganzas of his contemporaries, some of his observations nevertheless strike a highly paradoxical note. What, for example, does he mean by the term 'deed' in this context? If his point is that the law does not concern itself in *any* way with questions of intent, motivation, even of general character and disposition, then – in the case of many legal systems, at least – this seems to be simply false; and it might anyway be suggested that he is hardly on very secure ground himself in raising such a consideration, if one takes account of his previously-adumbrated theory of action in relation to the will, with its apparent impoverishment of ordinary notions ascribing responsibility. Again, and quite apart from this, does not the state regard part of its duty to be the reform of the criminal, not merely the deterrence of other possible offenders – crude and inappropriate though its methods may sometimes appear to be? And if so, is there not an analogy here with ethics, in so far as moral instruction and guidance has precisely the purpose of seeking to alter or improve men's characters? In trying to answer such objections, Schopenhauer would presumably have referred back to the contrast drawn between the empirical and intelligible characters; it is noticeable that many of the distinctions implicit

in our customary interpretation of human actions, which he seems to override at the conscious phenomenal level, tend to find their way back into his thought when he is speaking of the noumenon. In the light of this contrast, too, he would doubtless have re-emphasized his contention that men can never be changed or reformed in their innermost selves by any kind of external influence, whether it takes the form of applying punishment or of using some other means. And he might have argued, as well, that the points raised do not in any case touch the centre of his position here, which is that the very existence of the state presupposes a recognition of the fact that, when left to themselves, men cannot be relied upon to respect one another's wants, needs, and interests; 'if this were not the case it would itself be superfluous' (I, p. 445). Thus a consideration of the reasons for, and the operations of, political and legal institutions merely throws into relief the central problem of ethics, the problem of how it is possible for a man to act from regard not for himself but for another.

Kierkegaard once remarked of Schopenhauer that he 'made ethics into genius',[1] and the aphorism contains a true insight. As we have seen, Schopenhauer treats egoism in human behaviour as being inseparably bound up with the kind of knowledge we have of the world when we comprehend it under the forms prescribed by the principle of sufficient reason. So long as a man views reality in terms of the *principium individuationis*, he cannot but conduct himself as if he and his interests and desires were all-important: he cannot, in his relations with others, resist the feeling that his will, as he is directly aware of it in his individual self-consciousness, constitutes the centre of the world:

> . . . his ephemeral person, his extensionless present, his momentary satisfaction, this alone has reality for him; and he does all to maintain it. . . . (I, p. 455)

It is from this that there arises the readiness to treat other people as being of no account which lies at the heart of all moral vice and turpitude, ranging from mere callous disregard for

1. *Journals*, 1319.

their sufferings to actually taking a perverse pleasure in seeing them in pain or misfortune; the latter, *Schadenfreude*, is 'diabolical' and 'the infallible sign of an entirely bad heart'. Schopenhauer now asserts, as a consequence of what has so far been claimed, that all morally good action requires as its precondition a degree of liberation on the part of the agent from the type of knowledge that is determined by the principle of sufficient reason – he must not view the world in the ordinary way, but his eyes must be opened by a 'better knowledge' (*bessere Erkenntnis*). Thus here, once again, there is a connexion between ethics and art. The morally good man, like the artistic genius, is not – or at any rate is not wholly – committed and confined to the standpoint of everyday reflection and perception; he is not the entirely deluded victim of the world of phenomena, where all appears under the aspects of particularity and multiplicity, and where he is conscious of himself as separated from everything else by a great divide. To some extent at least he penetrates the veil. Whereas, however, the artist's liberation from the *principium individuationis* expresses itself in the *contemplation* of things, in the capacity to transcend the limitations of perception guided by practical utility and egotistical interest, thereby attaining cognizance of the Idea, such liberation as it touches the moral agent displays itself differently. For there it makes itself apparent in the *actions* the man performs; a profound awareness of the nature of the world as it really is – below the level of phenomenal appearances, deeper even than the Ideas which represent the permanent underlying archetypes of those appearances – informs his conduct and shines through the things that he does. Such a man, through the manner in which he behaves towards other human beings, shows that he draws 'less distinction between himself and others than is usually done', and thus exhibits a recognition of the illusory character of the divisions between persons which, under the conditions of ordinary knowledge, are necessarily established and universally accepted. For when the restrictions which the principle of individuation imposes on our vision are removed, our relations with our fellow beings must appear in an utterly changed light; and it is just this that affords a true

explanation of the possibility of actions of genuine moral worth. Such actions seem strange only when, as is usual, we think of men as being eternally removed and set apart from one another, and of their being compelled to envisage their situation in this light: ego against non-ego, self against non-self.

Thus Schopenhauer holds that when each individual is seen to be what he really is – the phenomenal manifestation of that which 'constitutes the inner nature of everything and lives in all' – moral ideas, together with the behaviour wherein they find embodiment, take on another aspect. From such a point of view, indeed, it is wrong or unjust actions that seem to stand most in need of explanation; for a wrong act, whatever form it may have (and Schopenhauer cites, among other things, murder, enslavement, and theft as typically unjust), essentially exhibits the denial of one person's will through the assertion of the will of another, and such a transgression, when truly understood, is nothing but the tearing and rending by itself of what is ultimately one and the same will. In his behaviour the just man, who respects the person, freedom, and property of others, shows that he has attained sufficient penetration of the forms of ordinary knowledge to recognize this; and in fact even those who habitually act unjustly manifest (more often than not) a dim and confused understanding of the truth, in the feeling of disquietude they experience as an accompaniment or result of their deeds. The concepts of *right* and *wrong* do not, however, exhaust the sphere of morally significant action: for Schopenhauer *right* is a merely 'negative' concept, parasitic upon the idea of wrong; and he seems to commit himself to the paradoxical view that refusal to help others in distress (for instance), though certainly 'fiendish and cruel', is nevertheless not wrong in the sense he has described, and hence must strictly speaking be 'right'. In making this rather curious point, Schopenhauer's concern was, I think, to emphasize – though admittedly in a very strange manner – the restricted scope of the ideal of justice; conformity to the demands of justice represents only a very limited degree of penetration of the *principium individuationis*, and for a fuller realization of the nature of

morality we must look to the kind of behaviour and character that falls under the more positive concept of moral goodness. Here we find more than simply a refusal to injure one's neighbour or to restrict his liberty of action in the illegitimate furtherance of one's own interests; we find an actual desire to help him, to go to his aid when he is in difficulties or pain, to alleviate his sufferings, and to do these things at personal hardship or cost to oneself – Schopenhauer instances the case of a man possessing a large fortune who uses very little of it himself and gives the rest away to the poor, thereby depriving himself of comforts and pleasures he would otherwise have enjoyed. In actions like these, which exemplify *Menschenliebe* and are a sign of true nobility of heart, we see people making the miseries of others their own. For to do them is to view another person as more than a mere 'stranger'; 'I suffer *in him*, for all that his skin does not enclose my nerves' (*FM* §18): and however mysterious such a process may seem to the ordinary understanding, however incomprehensible it may be to the eye of reason, there can be no doubt that it occurs. It is interesting to notice that in this connexion Schopenhauer lets fall one of his few complimentary references to women; although 'injustice and falseness' are the besetting sins of women, they surpass men in their capacity to feel and sympathize with those about them, and their actions are more often endowed with the virtue of loving-kindness.

In general, then, Schopenhauer's theory of moral behaviour enables us to grasp more clearly the reasons which led him finally to reject the scheme which we normally bring to our experience and understanding of the world. It is not only that everyday and scientific categories fail to reach beneath the surface of human nature and consciousness; not only that artistic creation and appreciation presuppose the transcendence of the limits set by ordinary modes of knowledge and awareness; it has now been argued that both just and altruistic forms of conduct are possible, and the sources of such conduct intelligible, only on the assumption that the world as it presents itself 'as idea' is throughout deceptive and illusory. But Schopenhauer was nevertheless far from wishing to claim that the 'better

knowledge' that is exhibited in the performance of morally good actions is of an 'abstract' or theoretical kind; on the contrary, he insists that 'the mere concept is for genuine virtue just as unfruitful as it is for genuine art' (I, p. 485), and further that 'moral excellence stands higher than all theoretical sapience' (*FM* §22); a man may be completely deficient in theoretical ability, and yet show forth or reveal through his actions the deepest insight and wisdom, which he may not be able to articulate or formulate in any conceptual form; from this standpoint, the significance of his actions may be said to be obscure to him. And as with his conception of what he does, so with what it is that prompts him to do it; the fundamental thing here is nearer to 'feeling' than rational reflection or calculation, expressing itself in a direct inward sense of pity or compassion for another, rather than in the abstract application of general principles in the Kantian fashion, or than in a cold consideration of what would be to the greatest general advantage or conform most exactly to the divine will (*FM* §19). Nor could such a man necessarily give an account of the peculiar sense of satisfaction experienced in the performance of a good or disinterested deed, so different from what is felt when a man gratifies some selfish desire or passion; or explain the comparative peace and contentment that pervades the mind of one who, however obscurely, recognizes the external world to be 'homogeneous with his own being' and other people to represent, not something quite apart from himself, but rather 'himself once more'. We should not be surprised by these things, by this inability to expound, to rationalize, to put what is felt into words; indeed, to sneer or to express incredulity here would itself signify a lack of the higher understanding that is involved. For the kind of phenomenon under discussion must of its nature be strange and incomprehensible when considered in the light of ordinary experience and thought, since it touches something that is beyond their range: 'in the end it springs out of, and finds its only true explanation in, that very knowledge which constitutes the essence of all that is truly mystical' (*FM* §22).

Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein

The passages in which Schopenhauer discusses the manifestations of moral goodness in action and character have an intense, finely-wrought, and at times curiously moving quality which only direct quotation could adequately convey, and which almost disarms criticism. Some of his remarks, moreover, seem to show a more realistic appreciation of the nature of many moral situations, and of the manner in which people tend to respond to them, than that exhibited by philosophers who – whether in the interests of a theoretical ideal or for some other reason – envisage all cases of moral action and decision as involving the explicit subsumption of instances beneath universal maxims and precepts: this can be granted without necessarily subscribing to the more extreme position regarding the role of rules in morality apparent in Schopenhauer's polemic against the Kantian theory. How far he really wished to press some of the ideas suggested by what he said there is in any case a matter for doubt. Sometimes he seems to imply merely that, while it is possible to formulate and follow general moral precepts without necessarily presupposing the existence of a divine will, such precepts can never be more than systematizations of our immediate or 'intuitive' moral responses to individual cases, and must ultimately derive their validity from these alone. At others, despite his explicit separation of the functions of the philosopher and the moralist, he appears to be putting forward something more closely approaching a specific moral point of view, according to which good actions springing from spontaneous sentiment should be valued infinitely more highly than any that proceed from considerations of abstract duty. But however this may be, his general standpoint remains one according to which the fundamental source of ethical conduct lies in the heart, the untutored inward being of a man; genuine moral feelings and attitudes, expressive of a deep (if unformulated) insight into the nature of things – which must be clearly distinguished from the theoretical or technical knowledge that guides us in our practical everyday dealings with the world – are not in the last resort capable of being instilled from

without or self-imposed from within. In this, as in other respects, Schopenhauer's treatment of ethical matters stands at the opposite pole from all characteristically 'public' conceptions of morality; conceptions, that is, which stress the social role of moral codes in harmonizing interests, which focus attention upon the prescriptive or regulative function of moral judgements, and which give priority to pragmatic or utilitarian factors when treating of questions relating to the attribution of responsibility and blame.

It must, all the same, be admitted that Schopenhauer's own formulation of his position lies exposed to a number of possible objections. It could be argued, for instance, that the problems to which it is alleged to offer solutions are partly of his own making. Thus it is one thing to reject the specific picture he associates with Kantian ethics, by which 'reason' tends to be presented as a kind of quasi-divine legislator or commander, or again as some sort of inner driving force acting in competition with our desires and inclinations. It is another to raise general doubts about the part certain familiar forms of reasoning can be said to play in determining genuinely moral conduct, and to speak as if recognized types of moral education, whatever their practical advantages, must be ineffective so far as the moulding and development of a man's 'real' character is concerned. Here, as we have seen, Schopenhauer was influenced to a considerable degree by his conception of deliberation and of the operation of 'motives', and by his metaphysical theory of the 'inner nature' that decides a man's responses to different kinds of inducement. Moreover, quite apart from the difficulties surrounding these particular doctrines, is it in any case really necessary to suppose that the notion we ordinarily have of ourselves as separate individuals should inescapably and inevitably issue in action of an unrestrictedly egotistical kind; and that it is impossible, for instance, for a man disinterestedly to go to the assistance of another if he does not regard himself as being, in some not very clear sense, 'identical' with him? Indeed, it might be argued that such an assumption tacitly presupposes the belief that egoism does in the last analysis represent the only effective spring of any human behaviour

whatever, moral as well as immoral, inasmuch as it still treats love of self as the ultimate determinant even in altruistic or disinterested action, explaining such action by the metaphysical device of extending the concept of *self* to embrace the whole of mankind. And even when they are judged within the terms of reference provided by his own system, it would appear that a number of Schopenhauer's contentions raise problems. One might inquire, for example, how it is that the will, which has previously been described in such uncompromisingly unattractive terms, can at the same time be understood sometimes to express itself in the guise of persons endowed with high moral virtue and with a capacity for transcending all individualistic modes of knowledge. (A parallel difficulty arises in Schopenhauer's theory of artistic genius.) Again, the whole question of the relation assumed to hold between the particular 'will' of a morally good man, and the 'better knowledge' or understanding he is said to possess, remains something of a mystery.

Schopenhauer himself openly recognized the force of some of these questions, expressing the hope that another would come after him who would 'throw light into this dark abyss'. Behind his remarks on morality there often seems to lie the image of a certain kind of saintly character, of which it might be claimed that more everyday and mundane ethical ideas can scarcely take account; the behaviour and reactions of such a person will originate in so different a conception of his relations to others that when judged by ordinary standards they may give the impression of being utterly strange, even quixotic or absurd. At the same time Schopenhauer believed that, since ethics was ultimately concerned with what lay beyond space and time, beyond the forms of phenomenal representation, it was not a matter for surprise that a great deal in the subject should seem to defy analysis, however penetrating; ethics *is* mysterious, at least in so far as it remains opaque to normal modes of rational comprehension. One is reminded here of some of Levin's reflections at the end of Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina* concerning the moral vision that cannot be explained or dissected by 'reason', since it pertains to what lies beyond 'the chain of cause and effect', beyond the scope of notions like

consequence and reward. And one may also be reminded of Wittgenstein.

Allusion has already been made in this book to the impression Schopenhauer's writings produced upon Wittgenstein as a young man, and we may therefore conclude the present chapter by offering a few, unavoidably tentative, comparisons. It is indeed arguable that, considered as a whole, the form of the *Tractatus* exhibits markedly Schopenhauerian characteristics, the general structure and limitations which Schopenhauer (following Kant) ascribed both to everyday and to scientific thinking and knowledge reappearing in Wittgenstein's work as necessary restrictions upon what is linguistically expressible.[1] And certainly a reading of the notebooks Wittgenstein kept during the years immediately preceding the writing of the *Tractatus* makes apparent the extent to which some of Schopenhauer's leading ideas were interwoven among his thoughts during this period, particularly Schopenhauer's aesthetic doctrines and his view of man as the 'microcosm'. Thus, concerning art and its relation to morality, Wittgenstein wrote: 'The work of art is the object seen *sub specie aeternitatis*; and the good life is the world seen *sub specie aeternitatis*. This is the connexion between art and ethics. The usual way of looking at things sees objects as it were from the midst of them, the view *sub specie aeternitatis* from outside.'[2] And, concerning the relation of oneself with the rest of the world, there are a number of scattered observations, many highly reminiscent of Schopenhauer; e.g. at one point Wittgenstein remarks: 'There is really only one world soul, which I for preference call *my* soul and as which alone I conceive what I call the soul of others.'[3] And later on: 'It is true; man *is* the microcosm; I am my world.'[4] Further, when in another place he is discussing the nature of the 'willing subject' and the puzzle 'why men have always believed that there was *one* spirit common to the whole world', he speaks of at last seeing 'that I too belong with the rest of the

1. See Erik Stenius, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (1960), especially Ch. XI.

2. *Notebooks 1914–1916*, tr. G. E. M. Anscombe, p. 83.

3. ibid., p. 49.

4. ibid., p. 84.

world', and of there being a sense in which one can refer to a will that is common to everything; but such a will is 'in a higher sense *my* will' – 'as my idea is the world, in the same way my will is the world-will.'[1]

So far, however, as the *Tractatus* itself is concerned, it is in the brief but pregnant statements to be found there on ethics and the meaning of life that the influence of Schopenhauer is most clearly discernible. For instance, Wittgenstein refers to ethics as 'transcendental' (in the *Notebooks* it is 'transcendent'), and distinguishes the will as 'the bearer of the ethical', about which we cannot speak, from the will as 'a phenomenon', which is 'only of interest to psychology' (6.423). This seems to recall Schopenhauer's doctrine concerning the distinction between the 'intelligible' and 'empirical' characters, and his insistence upon the idea that the true source of a man's nature lies in 'an act of the will' which takes place independently of all spatial and temporal determinations; although it should also be recognized that while Schopenhauer treats phenomenal reality, including human beings and their behaviour, as the direct 'outer' manifestation of 'inner' will, Wittgenstein (in the *Tractatus* at least) speaks as if what happens in the world were always 'independent of my will': there is no 'logical' connexion between the world and the will, so that 'even if everything we wished were to happen, this would only be so to speak a favour of fate' (6.373–4). Miss Anscombe, in her book on the *Tractatus*, has stressed the difference from Schopenhauer in this respect, while at the same time pointing to the connexion between Wittgenstein's conception of a 'chimerical "will" which effects nothing in the world' and his contention that 'good and bad willing . . . can only alter the limits of the world, not the facts; not that which can be expressed in language' (6.43).[2] But without denying this, it is at the same

1. *Notebooks 1914–1916*, tr. G. E. M. Anscombe, p. 85.

2. *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (1959), pp. 171–2. As, however, Miss Anscombe also indicates, there are traces of a different view, closer to Schopenhauer's account of the relation between willing and physical action, at places in the *Notebooks*. For example, when considering the question of whether the will is an 'attitude

time possible also to see some affinity in spirit between the above remark about alterations in the limits of the world and Schopenhauer's insistence that the good man comprehends the world quite differently from the selfish individual, by virtue of his 'penetration of the veil of appearances'. And such a suggestion gains some support from Wittgenstein's immediately subsequent observations to the effect that the world must thereby become an entirely different world, the world of the happy man being other than that of the unhappy. For as we saw earlier, Schopenhauer claims that a marked contentment and tranquillity distinguishes people whose dispositions are good, this being altogether absent in cases where the character is bad. And elsewhere, when he is discussing the common human desire for personal immortality and for a 'better world', Schopenhauer writes that the great majority of men are so constituted that they would not be happy in whatsoever kind of world they might find themselves placed; thus

> for a blissful condition of man it would by no means be sufficient that he should be transferred to a 'better world', but it would also be necessary that a complete change should take place in himself . . . To be transferred to another world and to have his whole nature changed are, at bottom, one and the same. (III, p. 286)[1]

A further resemblance, not unrelated to what has just been said, is suggested by Wittgenstein's remarks about 'the meaning of life', remarks which have been the subject of various very different interpretations by his commentators. I have in mind particularly his claim that 'the solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies *outside* space and time. (It is certainly not problems of natural science which have to be solved)' (6.431–2), together with what he says further on (6.521–2):

towards the world', Wittgenstein wrote: 'This is clear: it is impossible to will without already performing the act of will. The act of will is not the cause of the action, but is the action itself. One cannot will without acting.' And further on: 'Wishing is not acting. But willing is acting. . . . The fact that I will an action consists in my performing the action, not in my doing something else which causes the action' (*Notebooks*, pp. 87–8).

1. See also below, p. 287.

The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of this problem.

(Is not this the reason why men to whom after long doubting the sense of life became clear, could not then say wherein this sense consisted?)

There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical.

Now, as was noticed earlier, Schopenhauer explicitly connected the kind of insight exhibited in morally good action with the type of understanding which belongs to 'mysticism', thereby contrasting it with all scientific or everyday knowledge: he suggested, too, that one who is possessed of such insight may not be able to formulate it conceptually, it will simply express itself in what he does and how he feels. And thus far there can be said to be clear parallels with the passages quoted from Wittgenstein. There is also, however, a notable difference. For Wittgenstein, ethics (like what is mystical) necessarily remains beyond the reach of significant utterance; hence to represent what it imports as being linguistically expressible in *any* manner must be wrong. There may be such a thing as 'seeing the world rightly', but if so it is not such that it can be communicated in language: '*wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen*'. Schopenhauer, on the other hand, can scarcely be said in general to treat the difficulty a man may find in explaining and characterizing his *moral* insight as being one of principle, since he himself attempts such an explanation – inadequate and incomplete though he finally admits it to be. From this it would appear that for him the limits of *all* forms of discursive knowledge and thinking must ultimately be drawn not here but elsewhere. Ethics lies within the boundary, and it is only when we reach the next and final stage of his system that we find him drawing the line which Wittgenstein drew at an earlier point. Certainly the concept is 'unfruitful for ethics': it is not, that is to say, through theoretical reflection that a man is led to act well; he must, so to speak, 'feel' the insight which makes good conduct possible. It is unfruitful, too, in the sense that verbal formulae and principles, however instilled, are powerless in themselves to make a man better. But this is not

to say that what is 'intuitively' grasped and comprehended in the depths of the moral consciousness *cannot* be given conceptual expression; on the whole Schopenhauer implies that to a certain extent it can. Even so, he did not always speak with one voice on the matter, and passages can be cited which point to a different view. Thus he writes at one place (I, pp. 477-8) as if the knowledge from which virtue proceeds were beyond all language: 'just because it is not abstract, [it] cannot be communicated but must arise in each for himself', finding its true expression 'not in words, but only in deeds, in conduct, in the course of a man's life'. Again, in a later paper,[1] he begins by claiming that the morally good consciousness lies beyond the scope of 'theoretical reason': and goes on to argue that of a man who exhibits it 'we can make no further affirmation about him, for if we were to do so we should find ourselves in the realm of reason; and as it is only of what takes place within this realm that we can speak at all, it follows that we cannot speak of the better consciousness except in negative terms'. When taken together with the definition he provides in the same context of 'theoretical reason' as 'the aggregate of rules in accordance with which my knowledge – that is to say, the whole world of experience – necessarily proceeds', this remark recalls the ethical doctrine of the *Tractatus* in a manner that is surely striking.

1. See *Essays*, tr. T. Bailey Saunders, pp. 70-1.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Mystical

THE considerations touched upon at the close of the previous chapter bring us back to the problem from which Schopenhauer's philosophical system begins, and with which – in a way – it ends. The underlying picture in terms of which he depicts the human condition is one wherein man is conceived as a captive, as 'a squirrel in a cage'. This is apparent in what he says about human nature under both its cognitive and its practical aspects. Cognitively, we are imprisoned within the forms of knowledge prescribed by 'understanding and reason'; and attempts to overcome these limitations by *a priori* or rationalistic arguments ('dogmatic metaphysics') exhibit a fundamental failure to recognize the nature of the restrictions to which our ordinary modes of comprehension are subject. Practically, we are imprisoned within the laws which inform our own natures, collectively and individually, as creatures of 'will'; and attempts to deny this, by appealing for example to an alleged introspective consciousness of empirical freedom of choice, similarly rest upon profound misunderstandings. The two types of limitation are, moreover, intimately related; both our ways of comprehending and thinking about our experience, and the ways in which we characteristically conduct our lives and behave towards our fellows, spring from the same source: the unitary, all-pervasive, metaphysical will. It is to us, as manifestations of the will, that the world appears under the forms determined by the *principium individuationis* and is (so to speak) 'our world'; and it is because we are aware of the world under these forms that we conform in our action, as well as in our thought, to the governance of the will.

Is release from this imprisonment possible, and if so in what manner? It is a feature of Schopenhauer's philosophy as he develops it – a feature to which his critics have not been slow to take exception – that, having (as it seemed) initially blocked

all possible escape-routes, he goes on to allow progressively wider gaps to open in the previously impassable barrier. What originally appeared to be a fixed and rigid line, stringently circumscribing the limits of all human knowledge, gradually crumbles at crucial points under the pressure of a series of sweeping antitheses, these emerging and re-emerging at different levels of his system: for example, the antithesis between abstract and intuitively concrete understanding; between 'reason' (comprising deductive capacities and inferential skills) and 'insight' or 'wisdom'; between everyday, practically-orientated perception and 'will-less' contemplation; between the 'concept' of science and the 'Idea' of art; lastly, between theoretical knowledge which proceeds according to communicable principles or rules, and knowledge of a non-discursive or 'immediate' kind which derives its validity from inner conviction and 'feeling' and which lies at the root of ethics. And it might indeed be thought that with his explanation of the 'moral virtues' Schopenhauer had exhausted the implications of his philosophy in so far as it concerns the present problem. This, however, turns out not to be the case; there is still a further stage in the process of deliverance from the bonds which confine us to be considered.

The penetration of the *principium individuationis*, which exhibits itself in different degrees in the outlook and behaviour of the just man and of the man of outstanding benevolence and sympathy, only finds complete and final expression in what Schopenhauer terms 'the denial of the will to live'. This occurs through a 'transition' from moral virtue to asceticism. For the morally good man, since he has seen through the *principium individuationis*, the endless sufferings of living creatures other than himself appear as his own; he recognizes in all beings 'his inmost and true self', and consequently they lie 'just as near to him as his own person alone lies to the egoist'; he is therefore to be found directing himself towards assuaging the pain of those about him to the best of his ability. But a further stage is reached when this knowledge which the virtuous man has of 'the whole', of the true nature of the world, becomes 'the *quieter* of all and every willing', and when the thought of affirm-

ing life in *any* way becomes objectionable in itself. 'The will now turns away from life' and 'shudders at the pleasures in which it recognizes the affirmation of life'; thus it happens that a man may arrive at a state which is described as one involving 'voluntary renunciation, resignation, true composure, and total will-lessness' (I, pp. 489–90).

For a man whose will has thus turned round and 'denied its own nature', Schopenhauer claims that it is no longer enough for him to love others and to do for them as much as he would do for himself; he acquires so deep an insight into his own existence, as representing a particular manifestation of that reality which the phenomenal world with all its evils and miseries expresses as a whole, that the sacrifice of his own pleasures or possessions no longer appears valuable merely as a means towards mitigating the hardships of those around him; instead it becomes for him an end, something desired for its own sake. This is not, however, to say that conformity to the moral virtues – justice, and still more benevolence – do not greatly serve to promote the final turning of the will exhibited in the ascetic way of life. For one who consistently renounces his personal satisfactions and advantages for the sake of others, identifying himself with them, is thereby made ever more acutely conscious of the nature of the human condition in general, the vanity of all existence. And, at the same time, his own hold upon the fleeting pleasures of life is loosened as a result of the sacrifices he is continually compelled to make; it can be said that 'justice is the hair-shirt that constantly harasses its owner, and the charity that gives away what is needed provides constant fasts' (III, p. 425). It is not in fact necessary to suppose that the asceticism which in Schopenhauer's eyes marks the 'holy' as opposed to the merely virtuous man should take the extreme form of deliberately seeking out and suffering disagreeable or repulsive kinds of self-mortification, as is sometimes assumed (ibid., p. 425); celibacy, voluntary poverty, abstention from all worldly interests, and humility of the sort exhibited in the lives of the saints – these are sufficient to achieve that condition in which men become 'as it were freed from themselves'. In passages that at times have a

flavour reminiscent of Spinoza (the opening of Spinoza's essay *On the Correction of the Understanding* is mentioned with approval), Schopenhauer describes the state of a man in whom the 'storm of passions' has at last been stilled, and whose will is silenced, not merely temporarily – as occurs in the enjoyment of aesthetic experience – but 'for ever':

> Nothing can alarm or harass [*ängstigen*] him any more, nothing can move him; for he has cut all the thousand filaments of willing which hold us bound to the world and which, as appetite, fear, envy, and rage, drag us hither and thither in constant pain. He now looks back, calm and smiling, upon the illusions of this world, which were once able to move and agonize even his mind, but which now stand before him as indifferently as chessmen when the game is ended, or as fancy-dress cast off the morning after, whose forms teased and disquieted us on the carnival night. Life and its forms now merely hang before him as a fleeting appearance, like a light morning dream to one who is half awake, through which reality already shines and which can no longer deceive; and like such a morning dream they too, without any violent transition, finally vanish. (I, pp. 504–5)

Schopenhauer foresees two objections which he thinks may be made to what he has said so far. The first concerns the question of how the phenomenon he has depicted can occur at all, given his doctrine of an immutable unchanging human character always unfolding itself in a regular predictable manner in response to the motives with which it is presented. For to speak of the will's turning round and denying its own nature would seem to be to imply that a man may, through his own conscious volition, change his whole disposition; and Schopenhauer has previously gone to considerable trouble to show that such a possibility cannot be entertained. With regard to self-renunciation and asceticism, however, he claims that we have to do with an 'entirely exceptional case', in that here 'freedom' (which is otherwise held to belong solely within the sphere of the 'unconditioned' thing-in-itself) may directly manifest itself at the level of the phenomenon, resulting in 'a contradiction of the phenomenon with itself' (I, p. 371). He makes it

clear, nevertheless, that despite this we are not at liberty to draw the conclusion that self-denial in the first instance proceeds from a conscious or deliberate act of choice, in the sense postulated in traditional libertarian accounts of free-will. We can no more effectively *choose* to change our characters as a whole than we can choose to do particular things which do not conform with our characters; the kind of total reversal in the direction of a man's personality and will that is here in question, leading him to renounce his former desires and way of life, cannot be characterized in such terms. What occurs is more appropriately described as something that 'happens' to him, something that 'comes suddenly and as if flying in from outside'; it involves a 'transcendental change' in his whole being, which is at the same time utterly inseparable from the attainment of that profound vision of the inner nature of the world upon which Schopenhauer throughout lays such stress. What he has in mind here seems to be in some ways akin to the phenomenon signified by the concept of *conversion*: to those who find it mysterious, one can, he thinks, only reply by quoting Malebranche's dictum, '*La liberté est un mystère*'; in any case, he holds that it was certainly not unfamiliar to Christian mystics, who employed phrases like 'the work of grace' and 'the new birth' to express ideas essentially similar to the one put forward.

The other objection which Schopenhauer discusses concerns the point that, if a man believed that life and the world were as intolerably wretched as Schopenhauer suggests that he should, the most effective means of escape that would lie open to him would be suicide. It is maintained, however, that this proposal embodies a complete mistake. First of all, what drives a man to suicide in the normal case is simply a wish to avoid the personal sorrows which life inflicts upon him; it is thus manifestly an expression of the affirmation of his will, not of its denial: 'the suicide wills life, and is only dissatisfied with the conditions under which it has presented itself to him' (I, p. 515), and if these conditions were changed to his advantage he would no longer think of doing away with himself. It can be said then, that assertion of the will is just as much present in suicide as it

is in activities directed towards self-preservation or the gratification of sexual desire; although that does not mean that it is ever justifiable to treat it as a criminal offence, or even as a sin in the ordinary meaning of the word. In his essay, *On Suicide*, Schopenhauer condemned 'the vulgar bigotry that prevails in England' which condoned the ignominious burial of suicides and the seizure of their property, and also claimed that 'the clergy of Christendom' should be 'challenged to explain what right they have to go into the pulpit, or take up their pens, and stamp as a crime an action which many men whom we hold in affection and honour have committed': it is not even as if the prohibition could possibly deter anyone from doing it, 'for what penalty can frighten a man who is not afraid of death itself?'

Yet if suicide is not a crime it is none the less an error, in that it is taken to offer a real release where the release afforded is in fact only apparent. This can be seen from the distinction that has been drawn between ourselves conceived from a purely empirical point of view, as phenomenal existences, and ourselves conceived in terms of our true nature, that is to say as metaphysical will. By killing himself the suicide assuredly brings to an end his existence as an empirical individual, as a particular phenomenon of will, and so destroys his individual consciousness 'which is bound to the individual body' (I, p. 358). But it by no means follows therefrom that he destroys his metaphysical essence, since this lies 'outside time' and hence cannot be extinguished by any act undertaken against the merely phenomenal and therefore temporal objectification of its nature. Every individual is 'transitory only as phenomenon'; regarded as 'thing-in-itself' our nature is 'timeless' in the sense that no temporal predicates can be validly applied to it (I, p. 364). And Schopenhauer thinks that similar arguments can be used with regard to the problem of personal immortality. Men tend to see in death the end of themselves, and in one way of course this is right. Death is 'the temporal end of the temporal phenomenon', and beliefs in or hopes of a continued existence after death as the person one now knows oneself to be, with the individual consciousness one now has, are

no more than illusions. It is not as if one could, so to speak, conduct the experiment of dying in order to discover what happens afterwards; such an experiment would be a 'clumsy' one, destroying the identity of the very consciousness whose continuance must be presupposed if we are to become aware of the answer (*Parerga*, II, p. 333). For similar reasons it is absurd to fear personal extinction as if it were an 'evil' which we *suffer* when we are dead; for that is to assume that we in some way still retain our empirical individuality and are conscious of what we have lost, which is impossible. 'To have lost what cannot be missed is no evil' (III, p. 255), and in this sense Epicurus was right when he said 'Death does not concern us'. (The same thought underlies Wittgenstein's remark in the *Tractatus* that death is not 'an event of life', is not something we live to experience.) Even so, Schopenhauer is far from wishing to deny that the mere contemplation of the thought that at some future time he will cease to be is sufficient to fill a person with abhorrence; for as a particular expression of the will to live he naturally desires the continuance of his phenomenal existence through endless time. Can any consolation be offered to a man who, despite the manifest horrors and miseries of human life, nevertheless still affirms it? It might be thought that Schopenhauer would here invoke the doctrine of the 'intelligible' as contrasted with the 'empirical' character, which is so important in his ethical theory. He does not, however, do so, possibly because he envisaged the difficulties that would then be posed by problems of individuation and identification, all the normal, i.e. phenomenal criteria having been excluded *ex hypothesi* as inapplicable; there will be more to say about this in a moment. Instead he gives a different answer, claiming that, since 'life is always assured to the will to live', it follows that in so far as a man recognizes that will to constitute the innermost essence of his own person, an essence he shares with everyone else, he can be certain of endless life in time; for the will is bound to continue to objectify itself unceasingly in countless individuals, each like him the bearer of the subject and each like him doomed to pass away. From one point of view the individual's fear of death can be characterized as

essentially a fear of losing 'the present', the present being something which each of us is tempted to connect with his own individuality, rather as a man might imagine the position he happens to occupy on the globe as being 'above' and all other places as being 'below': Schopenhauer then attempts to show how in the last analysis such a fear derives from 'a false illusion, an impotent spectre', in the following passage:

> But just as on the surface of the globe every place is above, so the form of all life is the *present*, and to fear death because it robs us of the present is no more sensible than to fear that we may slip down from the round globe upon which we now have the good fortune to occupy the upper surface. The form of the present is essential to the objectification of the will. It cuts time, which extends infinitely in both directions, as an extensionless point, and stands immovably fixed, like an everlasting midday with no cool evening; just as the actual sun burns without intermission, while it only seems to sink into the bosom of the night. Therefore, if a man fears death as his annihilation, it is just as if he were to think that the sun can lament at evening: 'Woe is me! for I go down into eternal night.' Conversely, whoever is oppressed with the burdens of life, whoever loves life and affirms it, but abhors its torments, and especially can no longer endure the hard lot that has fallen to himself, such a man has no deliverance to hope for from death and cannot save himself through suicide. Only by a false appearance do the cool shades of Orcus allure him as a haven of rest. The earth rolls from day into night; the individual dies: but the sun itself burns without intermission, an eternal noon. Life is assured to the will to live; the form of life is an endless present. . . . (I, pp. 361–2)

The assertion that the form of all life is the present is a dark saying, and it would be easy to misunderstand Schopenhauer's meaning. Thus, when he writes elsewhere, as if it were self-evident, that 'no man has lived in the past, and none will ever live in the future' (I, p. 358), he can scarcely intend this to be interpreted as if it were some sort of very general empirical statement concerning the history and destiny of the human race; as such it would be ludicrous. Nor, again, is he using the expressions 'living in the past' and 'living in the future' in the way in which they might, for example, be applied to people

who repeatedly dwell upon incidents in their past lives or to people who spend much of their time considering what they are going to do or what is going to happen to them next; for here what he says would plainly be untrue. Rather, his point seems to be (in part at least) that whenever anybody has an experience, of whatever kind it may be, that experience must necessarily be something that falls within the area of his present consciousness; even if he recalls or brings to mind something that happened to him long ago, although *what* he remembers happened at a time prior to the present, his awareness of it (let us say it takes the form of having a certain image) occurs *now*. In this somewhat attenuated sense it can indeed be said that everyone, conceived as 'knowing subject', lives in the present, and Schopenhauer may assert without danger of refutation that the present will always and everywhere 'accompany me as my shadow', as something in principle inescapable. It remains hard to see, however, that when he argues that the fear an individual may have of losing the present through death is without ultimate foundation, he is saying more than that, whatever happens to the individual in question, life – and therefore the world – will go on. But it is improbable that either a man who contemplated committing suicide or a man who desired for himself eternal life would be impressed by such a consideration, even if they accepted the accompanying thesis concerning the metaphysical unity of the will. For both are finally concerned, though in different ways, with their fates as individuals and with this alone. And the destruction of the individual's life and consciousness has not been denied.

It might, in a general way, be inquired how it was that Schopenhauer regarded himself as entitled to speak with such assurance on this topic. In a subsequent essay on death and immortality he referred to the question 'What shall I be after my death?' as 'transcendent' in character and as not being susceptible to discussion in language essentially suited to the communication of 'immanent' or empirical knowledge. And it might be claimed that had he conformed consistently to the spirit of this observation, and to the Kantian view concerning the limitations of all objectively valid thought and knowledge

that seemingly underlies it, he would surely have treated the problem at issue as strictly insoluble, and would have been no more prepared to deny our persistence after death as individuals preserving personal identity than he was to affirm it. For did not Kant write of such problems that, since they lay outside the field of all possible experience, they were necessarily 'beyond the limits of human insight', and that we were therefore just as much precluded from establishing negative conclusions with regard to them as we were from arriving at affirmative ones? To interpret Schopenhauer with any degree of precision on this point would be difficult; we have seen how unstable, how shifting, the border between what can and cannot be known, between what can and cannot be said, was liable to become under his hands. All the same, it is not impossible to trace some of the operative reasons which led him to take up the position he adopted. For instance, in many traditional immortality doctrines it seems to be taken for granted that there is little question of its at least *making sense* to speak of a man's personal consciousness surviving the death of his body. On Schopenhauer's theory of knowledge, on the other hand, the awareness each one of us has of himself *as an individual* is inseparable from the awareness we have of ourselves as phenomenal objects amongst other phenomenal objects. In this way it is asserted at the start that the very notion of individual self-consciousness is tied in its application to the sphere of corporeal phenomena standing under the *principium individuationis*. But if so, the intelligibility, let alone the truth, of the idea that the individual 'consciousness' of a person may persist after his body has died would appear, on these grounds alone, to be in doubt. Furthermore, Schopenhauer has claimed that the entire phenomenal world is in the final analysis illusory, and so too is the distinction we commonly make between ourselves and others, upon which the ordinary concept of individuality is grounded. Hence it is not altogether surprising that he should have propounded a view according to which the only way of attaching a coherent and acceptable meaning to the notion of 'individual survival after death' lies in making it refer to the existence of other individuals, the reality of these being similarly confined

to the sphere of phenomena; in so far as they can be said to be united with those who are dead, it is solely in the sense of their sharing the same 'noumenal' or metaphysical essence.

Schopenhauer believed that such a conception in fact finds expression in at least one religious doctrine – metempsychosis, or the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. This teaching can no more be accepted *sensu proprio*, as representing the literal truth, than any other religious doctrine. To treat religious propositions in this way, and then to try to demonstrate them by metaphysical argument, leads infallibly to bad or dishonest philosophizing of a kind that is only too familiar. And the belief that we are continually being 'born again', if interpreted as meaning that the same individual consciousness or *ego* finds constant re-embodiment, in a series of different lives, is doubtless full of 'absurdities', deriving from the fact that we suffer from an inveterate tendency to conceive or picture things which touch our innermost nature in phenomenal and therefore inappropriate terms (III, pp. 299–300). Nevertheless, properly understood, the doctrine in question, which intuitively appeals to us at so profound a level that even sophisticated Western thinkers like Hume and Lichtenberg[1] have accorded it sympathetic consideration, and which plays so central a role in the Brahman and Buddhist faiths, can be seen as providing an 'allegorical' or mythical approximation to the true state of affairs. Schopenhauer's favourable references to metempsychosis represent, indeed, just one illustration of his attachment to, and deep respect for, the great Indian religions in general. In the preface to the first edition of his main work he claimed that 'the reader who has already received and assimilated the sacred inspiration of the ancient Indian wisdom . . . is best of all prepared to hear what I have to say to him': elsewhere he pointed out on a number of occasions, and with considerable satisfaction, that, in addition to the one just mentioned, there

1. Thus Schopenhauer quotes from Lichtenberg's *Selbstcharakteristik*: 'I cannot rid myself of the idea that I had died before I was born.' And he refers to Hume as saying, in his posthumous sceptical essay *Of the Immortality of the Soul*, that metempsychosis is 'the only system of this kind that philosophy can hearken to'.

were many other ways in which his philosophical conclusions broadly corresponded to cardinal conceptions implicit both in the mystical texts that make up the Upanishads and in Buddhist scriptures (particularly, it would appear, those of the Mahāyāna school); with the important difference, however, that what the authors of these writings had for the most part only been able to convey in an intellectually indistinct, though imaginatively very compelling, form, he had managed to present – so far as the nature of the case allowed – in the relatively determinate language of philosophical reflection. And it is unquestionably true that several of the leading ideas upon which Schopenhauer lays most stress in his system have analogues in beliefs that are integral to much of the religious thought of India. There is, for example, the Upanishadic contention that phenomenal reality, or the world of perception, is ultimately 'illusion' (Māyā), that it is 'impermanent' and 'fleeting' and to be contrasted with that which is truly 'eternal'. For beneath the veil of Māyā all things are asserted to be at root one, and what in the last analysis constitutes oneself, *Ātman* (not, however, to be confused with the empirical *ego* of ordinary self-consciousness), is identical with *Brahman*, the latter being a mystical concept to express the source from which all phenomenal existents spring and to which they all in the end return. Hence the Upanishadic formula, *Tat tvam asi* ('That art thou'), which is used to signify the inner identity of the individual with the world as a whole; and it is worth noting that it is a formula Schopenhauer repeatedly quotes in the context of his moral philosophy, even though from other points of view it would be erroneous to equate the Vedanta concept of *Brahman* with his own notion of metaphysical 'will'. Again, and this is true of Buddhist thought as well, there is a prime emphasis upon the need for 'release' or 'liberation', whereby freedom may be attained from the constraining bonds of egoism, and from the desires and cravings to which we are constantly subject as phenomenal beings and which are unfailingly productive of discontent and misery: as with Schopenhauer, human existence in general is regarded as being enmeshed in suffering.

So far as Buddhism itself is concerned, European investigators and commentators have often exhibited surprise that it appears altogether to dispense with a group of key concepts and assumptions – such, for instance, as the idea of a personal deity who created the world and whom, as his creatures, human beings should worship and obey – which has become, for Western minds, an almost inseparable element in the very notion of religious belief and outlook. In a section of his book *On the Will in Nature*, called 'Sinology', Schopenhauer noted the astonishment, the shocked bafflement even, with which recent travellers in Asia had reacted to this aspect of Eastern thinking and teaching; the very words with which to explain certain basic tenets of the accepted Christian faith seemed to be lacking in the languages of many of those to whom they spoke, and he cites a German sinologist, Neumann, as having said that such concepts as *God*, *soul*, and *spirit*, regarded 'as independent of matter and ruling it', were quite absent from Chinese thought, with the consequence that 'the first verse of the book of Genesis cannot without considerable circumlocution be translated into proper Chinese'. To Schopenhauer himself, on the other hand, it appeared to be a merit rather than a defect of the Buddhist faith that it preserved a 'noble silence' about matters such as these: it was to be commended, not condemned, for putting forward a doctrine of ethics and salvation which in no way involved the conception of necessary submission to the commands and prescriptions of an all-powerful God, and which treated the desire for immortality in the sense of separate personal continuance after death as a plain manifestation of that pervasive 'clinging to individuality' that has its practical counterpart in egoistic behaviour and must be wholly overcome. For the goal of orthodox Buddhism is not the continued affirmation and maintenance of the personal self, in whatever form, but instead its total dissolution in *Nirvāna* (actually meaning 'waning away'). And Schopenhauer expressly connects his doctrine of the denial of the will with this Buddhist conception. He is prepared to allow that ideas basically similar to his can be discerned lying hidden or distorted at the centre of other religions when they are correctly interpreted –

even, for instance, in Christianity, if it is stripped of the relics of Old Testament mythology and the accretion of misguided dogma with which it is encumbered. Nevertheless, it remains the case that, in the notion of Nirvāna, his own doctrine finds its nearest and least adulterated religious expression.

This is not the place to try to explicate that obscure and puzzling concept, or to trace the role it plays in the complex scheme of ideas and practices that constitutes the Buddhist path to salvation. It is, however, possible to identify one element among the various things said about it that certainly approaches closely to what Schopenhauer conceived to be the inescapable conclusion of his own philosophy. Any attempt to describe, positively and from within, the nature of the Buddhist goal is theoretically impossible. For in the sense in which features and objects of our ordinary experience are capable of description, there is simply nothing *to* describe: from this standpoint it is strictly ineffable, and can be characterized at most in purely negative terms. And in like manner Schopenhauer claims that, when his system reaches its 'highest point', it assumes an entirely negative character: it 'ends with a negation'. While we can speak significantly of that which, with the 'turning of the will', is denied and of that which is given up, when it comes to the question of what is thereby positively 'gained' or 'laid hold of' there is no possibility of informative utterance (III, p. 431). Thus we can certainly refer to the utterly different attitude towards everyday life and experience characteristic of the man in whom the will has turned; the change in the viewpoint from which he regards the world, so that things which to most of us present themselves as motives for action or 'interests' appear to him to be matters of no consequence. One can speak, too, of the altered vision that allows him to see in death, not an event to be feared, but rather something to be welcomed as breaking the 'last slight bond' that holds him to the world and to the individuality which he recognizes as being no more than the phenomenal expression of the will he rejects.[1] But if we desire

1. It is Schopenhauer's contention – hard to explain in the light of some other things he has said – that, in dying, not merely does the phenomenal individuality of the holy ascetic disappear; in his case,

to go further than this, if we inquire, for instance, into the nature of the experience or the knowledge such a man acquires in the place of all that he has surrendered or realized to be of no worth, we are fated to inevitable disappointment, for there can be no answer. Indeed, such questions are themselves illicitly raised. For in the final liberation from the will that is here being discussed there is necessarily an end of the world as idea and of the entire framework in terms of which our forms of knowledge and communication are set. As Schopenhauer puts it, 'denial, abolition, turning of the will, is also the abolition and the vanishing of the world, its mirror', for we have found the world to be no more than 'the self-knowledge of the will' (I, pp. 529–30). There can therefore no longer be any question of thought and knowledge, of perception or conceptualization or communication; philosophy has reached its limit and 'nothing but mysticism remains'. Mystics themselves may speak of their experiences in terms of 'ecstasy', 'illumination', 'rapture', and so forth: yet in the end these are all mere words and – in so far as they convey to us nothing positive – descriptively void. Even notions like that of 'entering into Nirvāna' can never be more than figures, capable of deluding and misleading us into believing that we understand what is in fact incomprehensible to us; and certainly their use in mystical contexts should not betray philosophers, whose realm is restricted to the area of communicable truth, into trying to overstep their proper boundary so that, 'by the assertion of intellectual intuitions or pretended immediate apprehensions of Reason', they are led to make a show of knowing what is really inaccessible to all knowledge and can only be indicated negatively (III, p. 431). But equally, it is not justifiable for philosophy to assume that just because the mystical insight lies beyond the reach of knowledge and meaningful description, it can be set aside as empty, no true insight at all. This is a tempting course, which finds expression

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unlike that of the man whose will still 'really' affirms life (e.g., the suicide), the 'inner nature' itself is also abolished, thus ensuring true and final release: a claim that, incidentally, recalls another aspect of Vedanta belief, where ultimate salvation is held to involve escape from the continual cycle of rebirths.

in all forms of positivism; nevertheless Schopenhauer thinks that, apart from anything else, the appearance and example of those who have 'overcome the world' forbids us to take it. We have only, for instance, to compare the serenity and profound air of calm that distinguishes the characters and shows in the faces of saints and mystics with the turbulence, dissatisfaction, and misery that are the dominant themes of most human lives. Of course it is true that, for those who are bound to the will and to its forms of cognition, what cannot be even conceived and expressed, let alone known, will indeed inevitably appear to be 'nothing'. But we must remember that *nothing* is a relative idea; what it portends for him who uses it depends upon who he is and where he stands. Then we shall be obliged to 'acknowledge that what remains after the entire abolition of will is, for all those who are still full of will, assuredly nothing; but, conversely, to those in whom the will has turned and denied itself, this world of ours which is so real, with all its suns and milky-ways, is – nothing' (I, p. 532).

With these words Schopenhauer brings his main work to a close. Underlying them is a thought that stands at the heart of a great deal of mystical doctrine, of whatever kind; namely, that with which mystical awareness has to do cannot be stated or verbally communicated, but in the last resort can only (metaphorically speaking) be 'seen' by one who has taken a certain path and to whom the everyday world in consequence presents itself in a totally new light. It is no doubt with this in mind that Schopenhauer claims that quietism and asceticism, the 'giving up of all willing' and the rejection of worldly interests, stand 'in the closest connexion' with mysticism truly conceived. Even so, and while allowing that the area is one in which perfect lucidity of exposition can scarcely be demanded, it must be admitted that his observations about the relations between mysticism and philosophy are far from always being unambiguously clear. We have seen, for instance, how in other passages he refers to the kind of understanding that is involved in specifically moral behaviour and consciousness as 'mystical' in character – at one place (*FM* §22) any purely unselfish or disinterested action, inspired solely by another's distress, is

spoken of as '*eine praktische Mystik*'; and it is not denied that such understanding represents a form of 'knowledge', albeit of a 'better' or 'higher' kind. Nor (for the most part at least) is it denied that such knowledge, though basically intuitive and 'immediate', may be raised through philosophical reflection to the level of discursive intelligibility and explanation. How are such statements to be reconciled with those we have just been discussing? One possibility that suggests itself (though it remains no more than a conjecture) is that when Schopenhauer spoke of mysticism he really had in view two distinguishable concepts, between which, however, he never clearly or explicitly differentiated. On one of these, mystical awareness, involves simply a true insight into the inner nature of the phenomenal world considered as a whole, and into our own natures regarded as elements of and participants in that world: it is in this sense that he speaks of mysticism as 'consciousness of the identity of one's own inner essence with that of all things or with the kernel of the world' (III, p. 433), such consciousness being something which his own philosophical system is intended to render articulate and to justify. On the other, while mystical awareness presupposes and springs from insight of the sort just described, it is itself to be understood as comprehending some 'deeper' apprehension, about which, however, nothing can be significantly thought or said; in this 'widest sense' mysticism is stated to concern 'the immediate consciousness of that to which neither perception nor conception, and thus in general no knowledge, extends', the very form of 'subject and object', which Schopenhauer holds to be fundamental to all cognition, 'entirely ceasing' (ibid. p. 430). An interpretation along these lines is certainly consonant with much else that Schopenhauer has to say about the scope of philosophical investigation. The latter has to do solely with the world, which it explains entirely 'from itself' and not by reference to something 'outside it' (as, for instance, traditional theism professes to be able to do): 'it must remain cosmology, and cannot become theology' (ibid. p. 431). Thus in so far as the mystical consciousness is assumed to involve a total cognitive withdrawal from the world under its phenomenal and noumenal

aspects alike, whatever may be the positive content of that consciousness must necessarily be closed to philosophy: 'the nature of things before or beyond the world, and consequently beyond the will, is open to no investigation' (ibid., p. 470).

Such an interpretation will not, nevertheless, resolve all the problems raised. For Schopenhauer makes it clear that his main ground for saying that knowledge is restricted to the world in the manner he has indicated is the Kantian one; wherever there is knowledge 'we stand already in the province of the phenomenal', and questions about 'extra-mundane things' concern what lies outside this province. But – to return to a familiar objection – does not precisely the same hold good for metaphysically 'intro-mundane' things as well, including Schopenhauer's postulated noumenal 'will'? Despite its ingenuity, the appeal to our own direct inner experience of ourselves as providing the key to the inner nature of the world in general is intellectually unconvincing, for reasons which (as has been noticed) he himself on occasions appeared tacitly to recognize. And it would seem that his equivocations on the subject of ethics, alluded to at the close of Chapter 6, likewise betray an uncomfortable concern with the same basic difficulty.

Conclusion

SCHOPENHAUER was not a rigorous thinker, and his system undoubtedly lacks the closely-knit integrated structure we tend (too narrowly) to associate with outstanding products of metaphysical genius in the past. He belongs, however, to another and equally recognizable class of philosophers who, while their work is without the formal precision and tight coherence characteristic of a certain kind of philosophical speculation, have not on that account proved lacking in importance in the development of the history of ideas. For such philosophers have frequently exhibited in their theories an originality and inventiveness, a freshness of standpoint or outlook, a power – in Friedrich Waismann's words – 'to see beyond the horizons of their time', which more than compensate for the inexactitude which, to a critical eye, is so pervasive a feature of their thought and reasoning. It can fairly confidently be predicted that there will always be some who will dismiss Schopenhauer's work as being at root inconsistent and confused, and as springing from an unappeasable desire to have things both ways. But (as was suggested earlier in this book) to adopt such a view is to be in danger of forgetting that where a philosopher is struggling to formulate a number of new or unfamiliar ideas, or where he is confronted with issues arising out of drastic changes in the structure of the thought of his time, difficulties of a logical character can scarcely be expected not to make their appearance, unresolved, in his writings.

Many of the obscurities and discrepancies in Schopenhauer's own system can be said to be grounded in a deep-lying intellectual conflict or tension. On the one hand, there was his adherence to the fundamental tenets of Kant's 'transcendental Idealism'; in particular, its emphasis upon our perceptual and conceptual limitations and its uncompromising denial of the possibility of metaphysical or 'transcendent' knowledge. On the other, there was the equally strong conviction that it was

not enough, for instance, merely to demonstrate that we interpret our experience in accordance with a certain categorial and conceptual scheme, this scheme being universally reflected in our common-sense and scientific judgements and shaping our outlook upon the world. For, in the first place, Schopenhauer felt that we should, without absurdity, be able to raise critical questions in appraisal of that scheme; that there are in fact aspects of our experience which invite us to raise such questions. And secondly, he thought that it must in some sense be possible to inquire *why* we are so wedded to this scheme, such an inquiry incidentally requiring an investigation of our inward being much more profound and far-reaching than any philosophy had so far succeeded in providing. For has not human nature 'depths, obscurities, and complexities, the elucidation and analysis of which is of the very greatest difficulty'? Yet this had not apparently deterred moral philosophers of repute from devising theories as naïve and simple-minded as those which pictured man as being in his essence free and reasonable and as always in principle capable of altering or overcoming the 'sensuous' or non-rational components of his nature by acts of purely rational judgement and choice. Again, to reach a true understanding of what we are it was necessary (as Bergson, too, was later to stress) that we should see how deeply we are involved in the living dynamic unconscious processes of nature: but to this consideration likewise philosophers had remained largely blind. Nor was it without significance, on Schopenhauer's view, that such vital processes were something Kant's 'mechanistic' Newtonian categories could not adequately accommodate or render intelligible; Kant, indeed, had himself come to realize this, in the *Critique of Judgement*, without however fully appreciating the implications of his admission (II, pp. 157–9).

Schopenhauer made it part of his task to remedy such deficiencies. At the same time, since he had accepted in its essentials the Kantian doctrine that all objective experience must be ordered and structured in a particular manner, incorporating this within his own theory of the 'world as idea', it appeared to him that what he had to say must in some manner pertain to

what lay beneath the veil of appearances – in other words, that it must concern the realm of the 'thing-in-itself'. But he had already treated the 'delusive' *principium individuationis* as providing the necessary conditions, not merely of all knowledge as ordinarily conceived, but of thought and communication as well; our concepts represent or 'reflect' what is originally given in phenomenal experience, and are wholly derivative from this. Hence (I think) the indeterminacy that surrounds his notion of the 'mystical', and the confusing expansion and contraction of the limits bounding the domain of possible experience, which are so recurrent and disconcerting a feature of his system. Hence, too, the difficult passages concerning the transcendence of individuality and liberation from the restrictive conditions of everyday cognition stated to occur in certain forms of consciousness, and the extreme importance accorded to 'genius' and to simple direct vision as contrasted with the pedestrian practically-oriented understanding afforded by the procedures of common sense and science. It would be easy to maintain that, had Schopenhauer not committed himself so unreservedly to the implications of Kantian Idealism, and had he also adopted a more flexible view of the function of human knowledge and of the potentialities and resources of ordinary thought, he would have been able to express his dissatisfaction with customary ways of describing and interpreting our experience in a less puzzling and vulnerable form: more specifically, in order to deepen and enlarge our notions of ourselves and our situation in the fashion he set out to do, it was surely not necessary to construct a mysterious theory concerning the hidden essence of reality as a whole such as he propounded. This may be so, although one suspects that it would have also involved the loss of much that is most individual and imaginatively suggestive in his metaphysic as it stands. A philosopher's genuine *aperçus* are not so simply detached from the framework of thought in terms of which they were originally formulated and to which they owed a large part of their original inspiration, eccentric and one-sided though that system may in the eyes of later generations appear to have been.

John Stuart Mill once claimed that 'almost all rich veins of

original and striking speculation' had been opened by 'systematic half-thinkers' – that is, by men who see only part of the truth but who, 'if they saw more . . . probably would not see so keenly, nor so eagerly pursue one course of inquiry'.[1] In Schopenhauer's case it can hardly be denied that the concentration of his vision enabled him to make a highly perceptive and important contribution towards altering the perspective in which earlier European thinkers had been content to envisage human personality and consciousness. Like his immediate successors in Germany, Nietzsche and von Hartmann (both of whom were deeply influenced by him), he helped to prepare the way for immense changes in the approach adopted towards the life of the mind: changes which have not only found determinate expression in the advances made by twentieth-century psychology, but which are also now implicit, at a non-specialist level, in a great deal of our everyday thinking and understanding. Partly because of this, and whatever the shortcomings of his own positive account, one can discover in his work intimations of ideas and problems that have become central issues in those areas of contemporary philosophy involving the consideration of mind and conduct. And his writings may also be seen as having a more general significance in relation to the development of the subject. We have noticed, for instance, how greatly he was occupied with a question which from Hume and Kant to Wittgenstein and Sartre has continuously engaged the attention of philosophers; the question, namely, of whether, and if so in what way, philosophy is capable of achieving a genuine and substantial enlargement of human knowledge, given the insurmountable obstacles that seem to bar the path of metaphysical speculation as traditionally conceived. Schopenhauer's own answers to some of the difficulties it raises appear quaint and unconvincing today: nevertheless he was acutely aware of the existence of the problem, and in his attempts to grapple with it he at least succeeded in bringing certain of its aspects into sharper prominence, while throwing an unexpected and revealing light upon others. Taken together, such consid-

1. J. S. Mill, *Dissertations*, I, p. 357.

erations may perhaps justify our saying of him, as he himself – quoting Voltaire – said of Kant:

> C'est le privilège du vrai génie, et surtout du génie qui ouvre une carrière, de faire impunément de grandes fautes.

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